The Story of My Experiments with Truth

M. K. GANDHI

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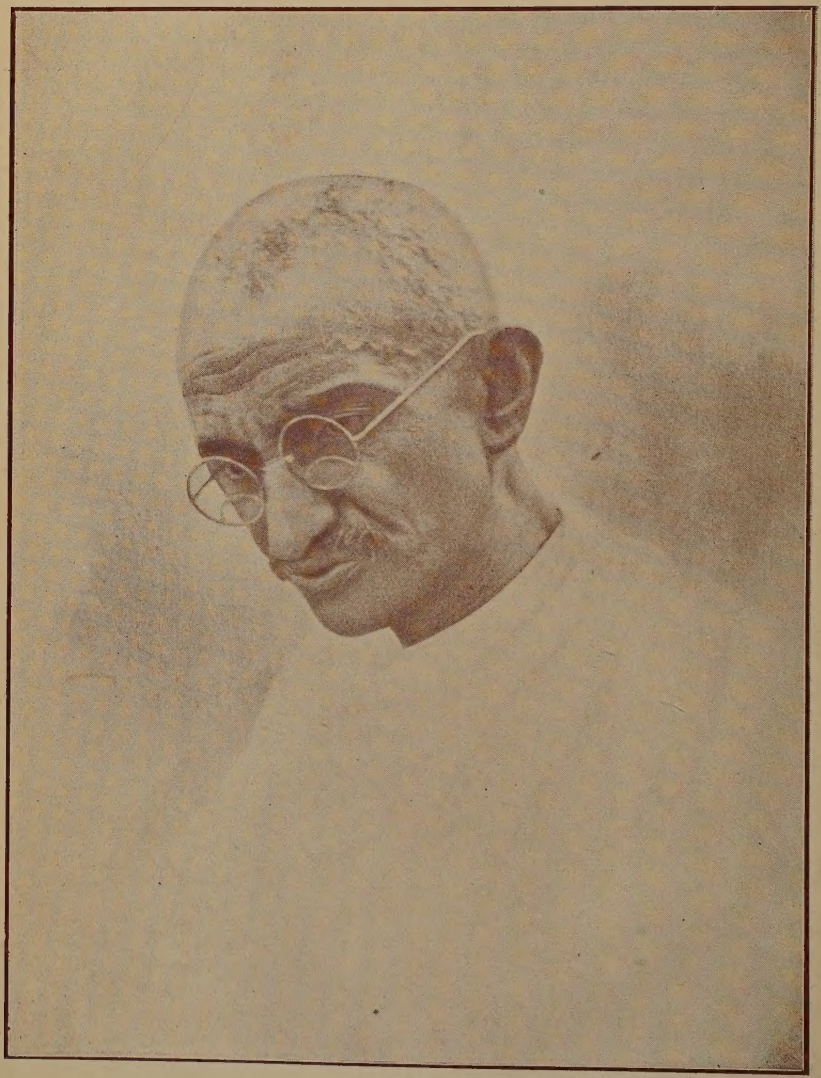

MAHATMA GANDHI

The Story
OF
My Experiments with Truth

By
M. K. GANDHI

Translated from the original in Gujarati
By
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and
PYARELAL NAIR

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PART IV

CHAPTER I

'LOVE'S LABOUR LOST'?

MR. Chamberlain had come to get a gift of 35 million pounds from South Africa, and to win the hearts of Englishmen and Boers. So he gave a cold shoulder to the Indian deputation.

'You know,' he said, 'that the Imperial Government has little control over self-governing Colonies. Your grievances seem to be genuine. I shall do what I can, but you must try your best to placate the Europeans, if you wish to live in their midst.'

The reply cast a chill over the members of the deputation. I was also disappointed. It was an eye-opener for us all and I saw

that we should start with our work *de novo*. I explained the situation to my colleagues.

As a matter of fact there was nothing wrong about Mr. Chamberlain's reply. It was well that he did not mince matters. He had brought home to us in a rather gentle way the rule of might being right, or the law of the sword.

But sword we had none. We scarcely had the nerve and the muscle even to receive sword-cuts.

Mr. Chamberlain had given only a short time to the sub-continent. If Shrinagar to Cape Comorin is 1,900 miles, Durban to Capetown is not less than 1,100 miles, and Mr. Chamberlain had to cover the long distance at hurricane speed.

From Natal he hastened to the Transvaal. I had to prepare the case for the Indians there as well and submit it to him. But how was I to get to Pretoria? Our people there were not in a position to procure the necessary legal facilities for my getting to them in time. The War

had reduced the Transvaal to a howling wilderness. There were neither provisions, nor clothing available. Empty or closed shops were there waiting to be replenished or opened, but that was a matter of time. Even refugees could not be allowed to return until the shops were ready with provisions. Every Transvaaller had therefore to obtain a permit. The European had no difficulty in getting one but the Indian found it very hard.

During the War many officers and soldiers had come to South Africa from India and Ceylon, and it was considered to be the duty of the British authorities to provide for such of them as decided to settle there. They had in any event to appoint new officers, and these experienced men came in quite handy. The quick ingenuity of some of them created a new department. It showed their resourcefulness. There was a special department for the Negroes. Why then should there not be one for the Asiatics? The argument seemed to be quite plausible. When I

reached the Transvaal, this new department had already been opened and it was gradually spreading its tentacles. The officers who issued permits to the returning refugees might issue them to all, but how could they do so in respect of the Asiatics without the intervention of the new department? And if the permits were to be issued on the recommendation of the new department, some of the responsibility and burden of the permit officers could thus be lessened. This was how they had argued. The fact however was that the new department wanted some apology for work, and the men wanted money. If there had been no work the department would have been found unnecessary and would have been discontinued. So they found this work for themselves.

The Indians had to apply to this department. A reply would be vouchsafed many days after. And as there were large numbers wishing to return to the Transvaal, there grew up an army of

intermediaries or touts, who, with the officers, looted the poor Indians to the tune of thousands. I was told that no permit could be had without influence, and that in some cases one had to pay up to a hundred pounds in spite of the influence which one might bring to bear. Thus there seemed to be no way open to me. I went to my old friend, the Police Superintendent of Durban, and said to him: 'Please introduce me to the Permit Officer and help me to obtain a permit. You know, that I have been a resident of the Transvaal.' He immediately put on his hat, came out and secured me a permit. There was hardly an hour left before my train was to start. I had kept my luggage ready. I thanked Superintendent Alexander and started for Pretoria.

I now had a fair idea of the difficulties ahead. On reaching Pretoria I drafted the memorial. In Durban I do not recollect the Indians having been asked to submit in advance the names of their representatives, but here there was the

new department and so they were asked to do so. The Pretoria Indians had already come to know that the officers wanted to exclude me.

But another chapter is necessary for this painful though amusing incident.

CHAPTER II

AUTOCRATS FROM ASIA

THE officers at the head of the new department were at a loss to know how I had entered the Transvaal. They inquired of the Indians who used to go to them, but these could say nothing definite. The officers only ventured a guess that I might have succeeded in entering without a permit on the strength of my old connections. If that was the case, I was liable to be arrested!

It is a general practice, on the termination of a big war, to invest the Government of the day with special powers. This was the case in South Africa. The Government had passed a Peace

Preservation Ordinance which provided that any one entering the Transvaal without a permit should be liable to arrest and imprisonment. The question of arresting me under this provision was mooted, but no one could summon up courage enough to ask me to produce my permit.

The officers had of course sent telegrams to Durban, and when they found that I had entered with a permit, they were disappointed. But they were not the men to be defeated by such disappointment. Though I had succeeded in entering the Transvaal, they could still successfully prevent me from waiting on Mr. Chamberlain.

So the community was asked to submit the names of the representatives who were to form the deputation. Colour prejudice was of course in evidence everywhere in South Africa, but I was not prepared to find here the dirt and underhand dealing among officials that I was familiar with in India. In South Africa the public departments were maintained for the good of

the people and were responsible to public opinion. Hence officials in charge had a certain courtesy of manner and humility about them, and coloured people also got the benefit of it more or less. With the coming of the officers from Asia, came also its autocracy, and the habits that the autocrats had imbibed there. In South Africa there was a kind of responsible government or democracy, whereas the commodity imported from Asia was autocracy pure and simple; for the Asiatics had no responsible Government, there being a foreign power governing them. In South Africa the Europeans were settled emigrants. They had become South African citizens and had control over the departmental officers. But the autocrats from Asia now appeared on the scene, and the Indians in consequence found themselves between the devil and the deep sea.

I had a fair taste of this autocracy. I was first summoned to see the chief of the department, an officer from Ceylon.

Lest I should appear to exaggerate when I say that I was 'summoned' to see the chief, I would make myself clear. No written order was sent to me. Indian leaders often had to visit the Asiatic officers. Among these was the late Sheth Tyeb Haji Khanmahomed. The chief of the office asked him who I was and why I had come there.

'He is our adviser,' said Tyeb Sheth, 'and he has come here at our request.'

'Then what are we here for? Have we not been appointed to protect you? What can Gandhi know of the conditions here?' asked the autocrat.

Tyeb Sheth answered the charge as best he could: 'Of course you are there. But Gandhi is our man. He knows our language and understands us. You are after all officials.'

The Saheb ordered Tyeb Sheth to fetch me before him. I went to the Saheb in company with Tyeb Sheth and others. No seats were offered, we were all kept standing.

'What brings you here?' said the Saheb addressing me.

'I have come here at the request of my fellow-countrymen to help them with my advice,' I replied.

'But don't you know that you have no right to come here? The permit you hold was given you by mistake. You cannot be regarded as a domiciled Indian. You must go back. You shall not wait on Mr. Chamberlain. It is for the protection of the Indians here that the Asiatic Department has been especially created. Well, you may go.' With this he bade me good-bye, giving me no opportunity for a reply.

But he detained my companions. He gave them a sound scolding and advised them to send me away.

They returned chagrined. We were now confronted with an unexpected situation.

CHAPTER III

POCKETED THE INSULT

I smarted under the insult, but as I had pocketed many such in the past I had become inured to them. I therefore decided to forget this latest one and take what course a dispassionate view of the case might suggest.

We had a letter from the Chief of the Asiatic Department to the effect, that as I had seen Mr. Chamberlain in Durban, it had been found necessary to omit my name from the deputation which was to wait on him.

The letter was more than my co-workers could bear. They proposed to drop the idea of the deputation altogether.

I pointed out to them the awkward situation of the community.

'If you do not represent your case before Mr. Chamberlain,' said I, 'it will be presumed that you have no case at all. After all, the representation has to be made in writing and we have got it ready. It does not matter in the least whether I read it or some one else reads it. Mr. Chamberlain is not going to argue the matter with us. I am afraid we must swallow the insult.'

I had scarcely finished speaking, when Tyeb Sheth cried out, 'Does not an insult to you amount to an insult to the community? How can we forget that you are our representative?'

'Too true,' said I. 'But even the community will have to pocket insults like these. Have we any alternative?'

'Come what may, why should we swallow a fresh insult? Nothing worse can possibly happen to us. Have we many rights to lose?' asked Tyeb Sheth.

I liked the spirited reply, but I also knew that the spirit was of no avail. I was fully conscious of the limitations of the community. I pacified my friends and advised them to have, in my place, Mr. George Godfrey, an Indian barrister.

So Mr. Godfrey led the deputation. Mr. Chamberlain referred in his reply to my exclusion. 'Rather than hear the same representative over and over again, is it not better to have some one new?' he said, and tried to heal the wound.

But all this, far from ending the matter, only added to the work of the community and also to mine. We had to start afresh.

'It is at your instance that the community helped in the war, and you see the result now,' were the words with which some people taunted me. But the taunt had no effect. 'I do not regret my advice,' said I. 'I maintain that we did well in taking part in the war. In doing so we simply did our duty. We may not look forward to reaping the reward of

our labours, but it is my firm conviction that all good action is bound to bear fruit in the end. Let us forget the past and think of the task before us.' With which the rest agreed.

I added: 'To tell you the truth, the work for which you had called me is practically finished. But I believe I ought not to leave the Transvaal, so far as it is possible, even if you permit me to return home. Instead of carrying on my work from Natal, as before, I must now do so from here. I must no longer think of returning to India within a year, but must get enrolled in the Transvaal Supreme Court. I have confidence enough to deal with this new department. If we do not do this, the community will be hounded out of the country, besides being thoroughly robbed. Every day it will have fresh insults heaped upon it. The fact that Mr. Chamberlain refused to see me, and that the official insulted me, is nothing before the humiliation of the whole community. It will become

impossible to put up with the veritable dog's life that we shall be expected to lead.'

So I set the ball rolling, discussed things with Indians in Pretoria and Johannesburg, and ultimately decided to set up office in Johannesburg.

It was indeed doubtful whether I would be enrolled in the Transvaal Supreme Court. But the Law Society did not oppose my application, and the Court allowed it. It was difficult for an Indian to secure rooms for office in a suitable locality. But I had come in fairly close contact with Mr. Ritch who was then one of the merchants there. Through the good offices of a house agent known to him, I succeeded in securing suitable rooms for my office in the legal quarters of the city, and I started on my professional work.

CHAPTER IV

QUICKENED SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

BEFORE I proceed with my narrative of the struggle for the Indian settlers' rights in the Transvaal and of the dealings with the Asiatic Department, I must turn to some other aspects of my life.

Up to now there had been in me a mixed desire. The spirit of self-sacrifice was tempered by the desire to lay by something for the future.

About the time I took up chambers in Bombay, an American insurance agent had come there — a man with a pleasing countenance and a sweet tongue. As though we were old friends he discussed

with me matters for my future welfare. 'All men of your status in America have their lives insured. Should you not also insure yourself against the future? Life is uncertain. We in America regard it as a religious obligation to get insured. Can I not tempt you to take out a small policy?'

Up to this time I had given the cold shoulder to all the agents I had met in South Africa and India, for I had thought that life assurance implied fear and want of faith in God. But now I succumbed to the temptation of the American agent. As he proceeded with his argument, I had before my mind's eye a picture of my wife and children. 'Man, you have sold almost all the ornaments of your wife,' I said to myself. 'If something were to happen to you, the burden of supporting her and the children would fall on your poor brother who has so nobly filled the place of father. How would that become you?' With these and similar arguments I

persuaded myself to take out a policy for Rs. 10,000.

But the changed mode of my life in South Africa altered my outlook. All the steps I took at this time of trial were taken in the name of God and for His service. I did not know how long I should have to stay in South Africa. I had a fear that I might never be able to get back to India, and so I had decided that I should have my wife and children with me, and no longer impose separation upon them, and that I should earn enough to support them. This train of reasoning made me deplore the life policy, and feel ashamed of having been caught in the net of the insurance agent. If, I said to myself, my brother is really in the position of my father, surely he would not consider it too much of a burden to support my widow, if it came to that. And what reason had I to assume that death would claim me earlier than the others? After all the real protector was neither I nor my brother, but the

Almighty. In getting my life insured I had robbed my wife and children of their self-reliance. Why should they not be expected to take care of themselves? What happened to the families of the numberless poor in the world? Why should I not count myself as one of them?

A multitude of thoughts passed through my mind, but I did not immediately act upon them. I recollect having paid at least one insurance premium in South Africa.

But outward circumstances too supported this train of thought. During my first sojourn in South Africa it had been Christian influence that had kept alive in me the religious sense. Now it was the Theosophical influence that added strength to it. Mr. Ritch was a Theosophist, and he put me in touch with the Society at Johannesburg. I never became a member of it, as I had my differences, but I came in close contact with almost every Theosophist. I had religious

discussions with them every day. There used to be readings from Theosophical books and sometimes I had occasions to address their meetings. The chief thing about Theosophy is to cultivate and promote the idea of brotherhood. We had considerable discussion over this, and I criticised the members where their conduct did not appear to me to square with their ideal. The criticism was not without its wholesome effect on me. It led to self-introspection.

CHAPTER V

RESULT OF INTROSPECTION

WHEN, in 1893, I came in close contact with Christian friends I was a mere novice. They were trying hard to bring home to me, and make me accept, the message of Jesus, and I was a humble and respectful listener with an open mind. At that time I naturally studied Hinduism to the best of my ability and endeavoured to understand other religions.

In 1903 the position was somewhat changed. Theosophist friends certainly intended to draw me into their Society, but that was with a view to getting something from me as a Hindu. Theosophical

literature is replete with Hindu influence, and so these friends expected that I should be very helpful to them. I explained that my Sanskrit study was not much to speak of, that I had not read the Hindu scriptures in the original, and that even my acquaintance with them through translations was of the slightest. But being as they were believers in *samskara* (impressions of previous births) and *punarjanma* (rebirth), they assumed that I should be able to render at least some help. And so I felt like a Triton among the minnows. I started reading Swami Vivekananda's *Rajayoga* with some of these friends and M. N. Dvivedi's *Rajayoga* with others. I had to read Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* with one friend and the Bhagavad Gita with quite a number. We formed a sort of Seekers' Club where we had regular readings. I already had faith in the Gita which had a fascination for me. Now I realised the necessity of diving deeper into it. I had with me one or two

translations, by means of which I tried to understand the original Sanskrit and decided to get by heart one or two verses every day. For this purpose I employed the time of my morning ablutions. The operation took me thirty five minutes, fifteen minutes for the tooth brush and twenty for the bath. The first I used to do standing in the Western fashion. So on the wall opposite I stuck slips of paper on which were written the Gita verses and referred to them now and then to help my memory. This time was found sufficient for memorising the daily portion and recalling the verses already learnt. I remember having thus committed to memory thirteen chapters. But the memorising of the Gita had to give way to the increase of other work and the birth and nursing of Satyagraha which absorbed all my thinking time, as the latter may be said to be doing even now.

What effect this reading of the Gita had on the friends with whom I

read it, only they can say, but for me the Gita became an infallible guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of daily reference. Just as I turned to the English dictionary for English words that I did not understand, I turned to this dictionary of conduct for a ready solution of all my troubles and trials. The words like *aparigraha* (non-possession) and *samabhava* (equability) gripped me. How to cultivate and preserve that equability was the question. What was the meaning of making no distinction between insulting, insolent, and corrupt officials, co-workers of yesterday raising meaningless opposition, and men who had always been good to one? And how was one to divest oneself of all possessions? Was not the body itself possession enough? Were not the wife and children possessions? Was I to destroy all the cupboards of books I had? Was I to burn my boats, give up all I had and follow Him? Straight came the answer: I could not follow Him unless I gave up all I had. My study of

English law came to my help. Snell's discussion of the maxims of Equity came to my memory. I understood more clearly in the light of the Gita teaching the implication of the word 'trustee.' My regard for jurisprudence increased, I discovered in it religion. I understood the Gita teaching of non-possession to mean that those who desired salvation should act like the trustee, who though having control over great possessions regards not an iota of it as his own. It became clear to me as daylight that non-possession and equability presupposed a change of heart, a change of attitude. I then wrote to Revashankarbhai to allow the insurance policy to lapse and get whatever could be recovered, or else to regard the premiums, already paid, as lost, for I had become convinced that God who created my wife and children as well as myself would take care of them. To my brother who had been as father to me, I wrote explaining that I had always offered him all that I had saved up to that moment,

but that henceforth he should expect nothing from me, for all future savings, if any, would be utilised for the benefit of the community.

I could not easily make my brother understand this. In stern language he explained to me my duty towards him. I should not, he said, aspire to be wiser than our father. I must support the family as he did. I pointed out to him that I was doing exactly what our father had done. It only needed that the meaning of 'family' should be slightly widened and the wisdom of my step would become clear.

My brother gave me up, and practically stopped all communication with me. I was deeply distressed, but it would have been a greater distress to give up what I considered to be my duty, and I preferred the lesser. But that did not affect my devotion to my brother which remained as pure and great as ever. His excessive love for me was at the root of his misery. He did not so much want my

money as that I should be well-behaved towards the family. Near the end of his life, however, he appreciated my viewpoint. When almost on his death-bed he realised that my step had been right and he wrote me a most pathetic letter. He apologised to me, if indeed a father may apologise to his son. He commended his sons to my care, to be brought up as I thought fit, and expressed his impatience to meet me. He cabled to me that he would like to come to South Africa and I cabled in reply that he could. But that was not to be. His desire as regards his sons also could not be fulfilled. He died before he could start for South Africa. His sons had been brought up in the old atmosphere and they could not change their course of life. I could not draw them to me. It was not their fault. 'Who can say thus far, no further, to the tide of his own nature?' Who can erase the indelible impressions with which he is born? It is idle to expect one's children and wards necessarily to

follow the same course of evolution as oneself.

This instance to some extent serves to show what a terrible responsibility it is to be a parent.

CHAPTER VI

A SACRIFICE TO VEGETARIANISM

AS the ideals of sacrifice and simplicity were becoming more and more realised, and the religious consciousness was becoming more and more quickened in my daily life, the passion for vegetarianism as a mission went on increasing. I have known only one way of carrying on missionary work, *viz.*, by personal example and discussion with searchers for knowledge.

There was, in Johannesburg, a vegetarian restaurant conducted by a German who believed in Kuhne's hydropathic treatment. I began visiting the restaurant myself, and helped it by taking English

friends there. But I saw that it could not last for any length of time as it was always in financial difficulties. I assisted it as much as I thought it deserved, and spent some money on it, but it had ultimately to be closed down.

Most Theosophists are vegetarians more or less, and an enterprising lady belonging to that Society now came upon the scene with a vegetarian restaurant on a grand scale. She was fond of art, was extravagant and knew little of accounts. Her circle of friends was fairly large. She had started in a small way, but later she decided to extend the venture by taking large rooms, and she asked me for help. I knew nothing of her finances when she thus approached me, but I took it that her estimate must be fairly accurate. And I was in a position to accommodate her. My clients used to keep large sums as deposits with me. Having received the consent of one of these clients, I lent about a thousand pounds from the amount to his credit.

This client was most large-hearted and trusting. He had originally come to South Africa as an indentured labourer. He said: 'Give away the money, if you like. I know nothing in these matters. I only know you.' His name was Badri. He afterwards took a prominent part in Satyagraha, and suffered imprisonment as well. So I advanced the loan assuming that this consent was enough.

In two or three months' time I came to know that the amount would not be recovered. I could ill afford to sustain such a loss. There were many other purposes to which I could have applied this amount. The loan was never repaid. But how could trusting Badri be allowed to suffer? He had known me only. I made good the loss.

A client friend to whom I had spoken about this transaction had sweetly chid me for my folly.

'Bhai,'—I had fortunately not yet become 'Mahatma,' nor even 'Bapu' (father), friends used to call me by the

loving name of 'Bhai' (brother),— said he, 'this was not for you to do. We depend upon you in so many things. You are not going to get back this amount. I know you will never allow Badri to come to grief, for you will pay him out of your pocket, but if you go on helping your reform schemes by operating on your clients' money, the poor fellows will be ruined, and you will soon become a beggar. But you are our trustee, and you must know that if you become a beggar, all our public work will come to a stop.'

The friend, I am thankful to say, is still alive. I have not yet come across, in South Africa or anywhere else, a purer man than he. I have known him to apologise to people and to cleanse himself, when having happened to suspect them, he had found his suspicion to be unfounded.

And I saw that he had rightly warned me. For though I made good Badri's loss, I should not have been able to find

another thousand pounds for any similar loss and should have been driven to incur debt,—a thing I have never done in my life and have always abhorred. I realised that even a man's reforming zeal ought not to make him exceed his limits. I also saw that in thus lending trust-money I had disobeyed the cardinal teaching of the Gita, *viz.*, the duty of a man of equipoise to act without desire for the fruit. The error became for me a beaconlight of warning.

The sacrifice offered on the altar of vegetarianism was thus neither intentional nor expected. It was a virtue of necessity.

CHAPTER VII

EXPERIMENTS IN EARTH AND WATER TREATMENT

WITH the growing simplicity of my life, my dislike for medicines steadily increased. While practising in Durban, I suffered for some time from debility and rheumatic inflammation. Dr. P. J. Mehta, who had come to see me, gave me treatment, and I got well. After that, up to the time when I returned to India, I do not remember having suffered from any ailment to speak of.

But I used to be troubled with constipation and frequent headaches, while at Johannesburg. I kept myself fit with occasional laxatives and a well-regulated diet. But I could hardly call

myself healthy, and always wondered, when I should get free from the incubus of these laxative medicines.

About this time, I read of the formation of a 'No Breakfast Association' in Manchester. The argument of the promoters was, that Englishmen ate too often and too much, that their doctors' bills were heavy because they ate until midnight, and that they should at least give up breakfast, if they wanted to improve this state of affairs. Though all these things could not be said of me, I felt that the argument did partly apply in my case. I used to have three square meals daily in addition to afternoon tea. I was never a spare eater, and enjoyed as many delicacies as could be had with a vegetarian and spiceless diet. I scarcely ever got up before six or seven. I therefore argued, that if I also dropped the morning breakfast, I might become free from headaches. So I tried the experiment. For a few days it was rather hard, but the headaches entirely

disappeared. This led me to conclude, that I was eating more than I needed.

But the change was far from relieving me of constipation. I tried Kuhne's hip-baths, which gave some relief, but did not completely cure me. In the meantime, the German who had a vegetarian restaurant, or some other friend, I forget who, placed in my hands Just's *Return to Nature*. In this book I read about earth treatment. The author also advocated fresh fruit and nuts as the natural diet of man. I did not at once take to the exclusive fruit diet, but immediately began experiments in earth treatment, and with wonderful results. The treatment consisted in applying to the abdomen a bandage of clean earth moistened with cold water and spread like a poultice on fine linen. This I applied at bedtime, removing it during the night or in the morning, whenever I happened to wake up. It proved a radical cure. Since then I have tried the treatment on myself and my friends, and

have never had reason to regret it. In India I have not been able to try this treatment with equal confidence. For one thing, I have never had time to settle down in one place to conduct the experiments. But my faith in the earth and water treatment remains practically the same as before. Even today I give myself the earth treatment to a certain extent, and recommend it to my co-workers, whenever occasion arises.

Though I have had two serious illnesses in my life, I believe that man has little need to drug himself. 999 cases out of a thousand can be brought round by means of a well-regulated diet, water and earth treatment and similar household remedies. He, who runs to the doctor, *vaidya* or *hakim* for every little ailment, and swallows all kinds of vegetable and mineral drugs, not only curtails his life, but by becoming the slave of his body instead of remaining its master, loses self-control, and ceases to be a man.

Let no one discount these observations, because they are being written in a sickbed. I know the reasons for my illnesses. I am fully conscious, that I alone am responsible for them, and it is because of that consciousness, that I have not lost patience. In fact I have thanked God for them as lessons, and have successfully resisted the temptation of taking numerous drugs. I know my obstinacy often tries my doctors, but they kindly bear with me and do not give me up.

However I must not digress. Before proceeding further, I should give the reader a word of warning. Those who purchase Just's book, on the strength of this chapter, should not take everything in it to be gospel truth. A writer almost always presents one aspect of a case, whereas every case can be seen from no less than seven points of view, all of which are probably correct by themselves, but not correct at the same time and in the same circumstances. And then many

books are written with a view to gaining customers and earning name and fame. Let those, therefore, who read such books as these, do so with discernment, and take advice of some experienced man before trying any of the experiments set forth, or let them read the books with patience, and digest them thoroughly before acting upon them.

CHAPTER VIII

A WARNING

I am afraid I must continue the digression until the next chapter. Along with my experiments in earth treatment, those in dietetics were also being carried on, and it may not be out of place here to make a few observations as regards the latter, though I shall have occasion to refer to them again later.

I may not, now or hereafter, enter into a detailed account of the experiments in dietetics, for I did so in a series of Gujarati articles that appeared years ago in *Indian Opinion*, and which were afterwards published in the form of a

book popularly known in English as *A Guide to Health*. Among my little books this has been the most widely read alike in the East and the West, a thing that I have not yet been able to understand. It was written for the benefit of the readers of *Indian Opinion*. But I know, that the booklet has profoundly influenced the lives of many, both in the East and the West, who have never seen *Indian Opinion*. For they have been corresponding with me on the subject. It has therefore appeared necessary to say something here about the booklet, for though I see no reason to alter the views set forth in it, yet I have made certain radical changes in my actual practice, of which all readers of the book do not know, and of which, I think, they should be informed.

The booklet was written, like all my other writings, with a spiritual end, which has always inspired every one of my actions, and therefore it is a matter for deep distress to me, that I am unable

today to practise some of the theories propounded in the book.

It is my firm conviction, that man need take no milk at all, beyond the mother's milk that he takes as a baby. His diet should consist of nothing but sunbaked fruits and nuts. He can secure enough nourishment both for the tissues and the nerves from fruits like grapes and nuts like almonds. Restraint of the sexual and other passions becomes easy for a man who lives on such food. My co-workers and I have seen by experience, that there is much truth in the Indian proverb, that as a man eats, so shall he become. These views have been set out elaborately in the book.

But unfortunately in India I have found myself obliged to deny some of my theories in practice. Whilst I was engaged on the recruiting campaign in Kheda, an error in diet laid me low, and I was at death's door. I tried in vain to rebuild a shattered constitution without milk. I sought the help of the doctors,

vaidyas, and scientists whom I knew, to recommend a substitute for milk. Some suggested *mung* water, some *mowhra* oil, some almond-milk. I wore out my body in experimenting on these, but nothing could help me to leave the sickbed. The *vaidyas* read verses to me from Charaka to show, that religious scruples about diet have no place in therapeutics. So they could not be expected to help me to continue to live without milk. And how could those who recommended beef-tea and brandy without hesitation help me to persevere with a milkless diet?

I might not take cow's or buffalo's milk, as I was bound by a vow. The vow of course meant the giving up of all milks, but as I had mother cow's and mother buffalo's only in mind when I took the vow, and as I wanted to live, I somehow beguiled myself into emphasising the letter of the vow and decided to take goat's milk. I was fully conscious, when I started taking mother goat's milk, that the spirit of my vow was destroyed.

But the idea of leading a campaign against the Rowlatt Act had possessed me. And with it grew the desire to live. Consequently one of the greatest experiments in my life came to a stop.

I know it is argued, that the soul has nothing to do with what one eats or drinks, as the soul neither eats nor drinks; that it is not what you put inside from without, but what you express outwardly from within that matters. There is no doubt some force in this. But rather than examine this reasoning, I shall content myself with merely declaring my firm conviction, that for the seeker who would live in fear of God, and who would see Him face to face, restraint in diet both as to quantity and quality is as essential as restraint in thought and speech.

In a matter, however, where my theory has failed me, I should not only give the information, but issue a grave warning against adopting it. I would therefore urge those who, on the strength

of the theory propounded by me, may have given up milk, not to persist in the experiment, unless they find it beneficial in every way, or unless they are advised by experienced physicians. Up to now my experience here has shown me, that for those with a weak digestion and for those who are confined to bed, there is no light and nourishing diet equal to that of milk.

I should be greatly obliged, if any one with experience in this line, who happens to read this chapter, would tell me, if he has known from experience, and not from reading, of a vegetable substitute for milk, which is equally nourishing and digestible.

CHAPTER IX

A TUSSLE WITH POWER

TO turn now to the Asiatic department.

Johannesburg was the stronghold of the Asiatic officers. I had been observing that far from protecting the Indians, Chinese and others, these officers were grinding them down. Every day I had complaints like this: 'The rightful ones are not admitted, whilst those who have no right are smuggled in on payment of £100. If you will not remedy this state of things, who will?' I shared the feeling. If I did not succeed in stamping out this evil, I should be living in the Transvaal in vain.

So I began to collect evidence, and as soon as I had gathered a fair amount, I approached the Police Commissioner. He appeared to be a just man. Far from giving me the cold shoulder, he listened to me patiently and asked me to show him all the evidence in my possession. He examined the witnesses himself and was satisfied, but he knew as well as I that it was difficult in South Africa to get a white jury to convict a white offender against coloured men. 'But,' said he, 'let us try at any rate. It is not proper, either, to let such criminals go scot-free, for fear of the jury acquitting them. I must get them arrested. I assure you I shall leave no stone unturned.'

I did not need the assurance. I suspected quite a number of officers, but as I had no unchallengeable evidence against them all, warrants of arrest were issued against the two about whose guilt I had not the slightest doubt.

My movements could never be kept secret. Many knew that I was going to

the Police Commissioner practically daily. The two officers, against whom warrants had been issued, had spies, more or less efficient. They used to patrol my office and report my movements to the officers. I must admit, however, that these officers were so bad that they could not have had many spies. Had the Indians and the Chinese not helped me, they would never have been arrested.

One of these absconded. The Police Commissioner obtained an extradition warrant against him and got him arrested and brought to the Transvaal. They were tried, and although there was strong evidence against them, and in spite of the fact that the jury had evidence of one of them having absconded, both were declared to be not guilty and acquitted.

I was sorely disappointed. The Police Commissioner also was very sorry. I got disgusted with the legal profession. The very intellect became an abomination to me inasmuch as it could be prostituted for screening crime.

However, the guilt of both these officers was so patent that in spite of their acquittal the Government could not harbour them. Both were cashiered and the Asiatic department became comparatively clean, and the Indian community was somewhat reassured.

The event enhanced my prestige and brought me more business. The bulk, though not all, of the hundreds of pounds that the community was monthly squandering in peculation, was saved. All could not be saved, for the dishonest still plied their trade. But it was now possible for the honest man to preserve his honesty.

I must say that though these officers were so bad, I had nothing against them personally. They were aware of this themselves, and when in their straits they approached me, I helped them too. They had a chance of getting employed by the Johannesburg Municipality in case I did not oppose the proposal. A friend of theirs saw me in this connection and

I agreed not to thwart them, and they succeeded.

This attitude of mine put the officials with whom I came in contact perfectly at ease, and though I had often to fight with their department and use strong language, they remained quite friendly with me. I was not then quite conscious that such behaviour was part of my nature. I learnt later that it was an essential part of Satyagraha, and an attribute of *ahimsa*.

Man and his deed are two distinct things. Whereas a good deed should call forth approbation and a wicked deed disapprobation, the doer of the deed, whether good or wicked, always deserves respect or pity as the case may be. 'Hate the sin and not the sinner' is a precept which though easy enough to understand is rarely practised, and that is why the poison of hatred spreads in the world.

This *ahimsa* is the basis of the search for truth. I am realising every day that

the search is vain unless it is founded on *ahimsa* as the basis. It is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself. For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.

CHAPTER X

A SACRED RECOLLECTION AND PENANCE

A variety of incidents in my life have conspired to bring me in close contact with people of many creeds and many communities, and my experience with all of them warrants the statement, that I have known no distinction between relatives and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, white and coloured, Hindus and Indians of other faiths, whether Musalmans, Parsis, Christians or Jews. I may say, that my heart has been incapable of making any such distinctions. I cannot claim this as a special virtue, as it is in my very nature, rather than a result of any effort on my part, whereas

in the case of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), *aparigraha* (non-possession) and other cardinal virtues, I am fully conscious of a continuous striving for their cultivation.

When I was practising in Durban, my office clerks often stayed with me, and there were among them Hindus and Christians, or to describe them by their provinces, Gujaratis and Tamilians. I do not recollect having ever regarded them as anything but my kith and kin. I treated them as members of my family, and had unpleasantness with my wife if ever she stood in the way of my treating them as such. One of the clerks was a Christian, born of Panchama parents.

The house was built after the Western model and the rooms rightly had no outlets for dirty water. Each room had therefore chamber-pots. Rather than have these cleaned by a servant or a sweeper, my wife or I attended to them. The clerks who made themselves completely at home would naturally clean their own

pots, but the Christian clerk was a newcomer, and it was our duty to attend to his bedroom. My wife managed the pots of the others, but to clean those used by one who had been a Panchama seemed to her to be the limit, and we fell out. She could not bear the pots being cleaned by me, neither did she like doing it herself. Even today I can recall the picture of her chiding me, her eyes red with anger, and pearl drops streaming down her cheeks, as she descended the ladder, pot in hand. But I was a cruelly kind husband. I regarded myself as her teacher, and so harassed her out of my blind love for her.

I was far from being satisfied by her merely carrying the pot. I would have her do it cheerfully. So I said, raising my voice: 'I will not stand this nonsense in my house.'

The words pierced her like an arrow.

She shouted back: 'Keep your house to yourself and let me go.' I forgot myself, and the spring of compassion dried

up in me. I caught her by the hand, dragged the helpless woman to the gate, which was just opposite the ladder, and proceeded to open it with the intention of pushing her out. The tears were running down her cheeks in torrents, and she cried: 'Have you no sense of shame? Must you so far forget yourself? Where am I to go? I have no parents or relatives here to harbour me. Being your wife, you think, I must put up with your cuffs and kicks? For Heaven's sake behave yourself, and shut the gate. Let us not be found making scenes like this!'

I put on a brave face, but was really ashamed, and shut the gate. If my wife could not leave me, neither could I leave her. We have had numerous bickerings, but the end has always been peace between us. The wife, with her matchless powers of endurance, has always been the victor.

Today, I am in a position to narrate the incident with some detachment, as it belongs to a period out of which I have fortunately emerged. I am no longer a

blind, infatuated husband, I am no more my wife's teacher. Mrs. Gandhi can, if she will, be as unpleasant to me today, as I used to be to her before. We are tried friends, the one no longer regarding the other as the object of lust. She has been a faithful nurse throughout my illnesses, serving without any thought of reward.

The incident in question occurred in 1898, when I had no conception of *brahmacharya*. It was a time, when I thought that the wife was the object of her husband's lust, born to do her husband's behest, rather than a helpmate, a comrade and a partner in the husband's joys and sorrows.

It was in the year 1900 that these ideas underwent a radical transformation, and in 1906 they took concrete shape. But of this I propose to speak in its proper place. Suffice it to say that with the gradual disappearance in me of the carnal appetite, my domestic life became and is becoming more and more peaceful, sweet and happy.

Let no one conclude from this narrative of a sacred recollection, that we are by any means an ideal couple, or that there is a complete identity of ideals between us. Mrs. Gandhi herself does not perhaps know whether she has any ideals independently of me. It is likely that many of my doings have not her approval even today. We never discuss them, I see no good in discussing them. For she was educated neither by her parents, nor by me at the time when I ought to have done it. But she is blessed with one great quality to a very considerable degree, a quality which most Hindu wives possess in some measure. And it is this; willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, she has considered herself blessed in following in my footsteps, and has never stood in the way of my endeavour to lead a life of restraint. Though, therefore, there is a wide difference between us intellectually, I have always had the feeling that ours is a life of contentment, happiness and progress.

CHAPTER XI

INTIMATE EUROPEAN CONTACTS

THIS chapter has brought me to a stage, where it becomes necessary for me to explain to the reader how this story is written from week to week.

When I began writing it, I had no definite plan before me. I have no diary or documents on which to base the story of my experiments. I write just as the Spirit moves me at the time of writing. I do not claim to know definitely, that all conscious thought and action on my part is directed by the Spirit. But on an examination of the greatest steps that I have taken in my life, as also of those that may be regarded as the least, I think

it will not be improper to say that all of them were directed by the Spirit.

I have not seen Him, neither have I known Him. I have made the world's faith in God my own, and as my faith is ineffaceable, I regard that faith as amounting to experience. However, as it may be said that to describe faith as experience is to tamper with truth, it may perhaps be more correct to say that I have no word for characterising my belief in God.

It is perhaps now somewhat easy to understand why I believe that I am writing this story as the Spirit prompts me. When I began the last chapter I gave it the heading I have given to this, but as I was writing it, I realised that before I narrated my experiences with Europeans, I must write something by way of a preface, which I did and altered the heading.

Now again, as I start on this chapter, I find myself confronted with a fresh problem. What things to mention and

what to omit regarding the English friends of whom I am about to write is a serious problem. If things that are relevant are omitted, truth will be dimmed. And it is difficult to decide straightway what is relevant, when I am not even sure about the relevancy of writing this story.

I understand more clear today what I read long ago about the inadequacy of all autobiography as history. I know that I do not set down in this story all that I remember. Who can say how much I must give and how much omit in the interests of truth? And what would be the value in a court of law of the inadequate *ex parte* evidence being tendered by me of certain events in my life? If some busybody were to cross-examine me on the chapters already written, he could probably shed much more light on them, and if it were a hostile critic's cross-examination, he might even flatter himself for having shown up 'the hollowness of many of my pretensions.'

I, therefore, wonder for a moment whether it might not be proper to stop writing these chapters. But so long as there is no prohibition from the voice within, I must continue the writing. I must follow the sage maxim, that nothing once begun should be abandoned unless it is proved to be morally wrong.

I am not writing the autobiography to please critics. Writing it is itself one of the experiments with truth. One of its objects is certainly to provide some comfort and food for reflection for my co-workers. Indeed I started writing it in compliance with their wishes. It might not have been written, if Jeramdas and Swami Anand had not persisted in their suggestion. If, therefore, I am wrong in writing the autobiography, they must also share the blame.

But to take up the subject indicated in the heading. Just as I had Indians living with me as members of my family, so had I English friends living with me in Durban. Not that all who lived with

me liked it. But I persisted in having them. Nor was I wise in every case, I had some bitter experiences, but these included both Indians and Europeans. And I do not regret the experiences. In spite of them, and in spite of the inconvenience and worry that I have often caused to friends, I have not altered my conduct and friends have kindly borne with me. Whenever my contacts with strangers have been painful to friends, I have not hesitated to blame them. I hold that believers who have to see the same God in others that they see in themselves, must be able to live amongst all with sufficient detachment. And the ability to live thus can be cultivated not by fighting shy of unsought opportunities for such contacts, but by hailing them in a spirit of service and withal keeping oneself unaffected by them.

Though, therefore, my house was full when the Boer War broke out, I received two Englishmen who had come from Johannesburg. Both were Theosophists,

one of them being Mr. Kitchin of whom we shall have occasion to know more later. These friends often cost my wife bitter tears. Unfortunately she has had many such trials on my account. This was the first time that I had English friends to live with me as intimately as members of my family. I had stayed in English houses during my days in England, but there I conformed to their ways of living and it was more or less like living in a boarding house. Here it was quite the contrary. The English friends became members of the family. They adopted the Indian style in many matters. Though the appointments in the house were in the Western fashion, the internal life was mostly Indian. I do remember having had some difficulty in keeping them as members of the family, but I can certainly say, that they had no difficulty in making themselves perfectly at home under my roof. In Johannesburg these contacts developed further than in Durban.

CHAPTER XII

EUROPEAN CONTACTS (*Contd.*)

IN Johannesburg I had at one time as many as four Indian clerks, who were perhaps more like my sons than clerks. But even these were not enough for my work. It was impossible to do without typewriting, which among us, if at all, only I knew. I taught it to two of the clerks but they never came up to the mark because of their poor English. And then one of these I wanted to train as an accountant. I could not get out any one from Natal, for nobody could enter the Transvaal without a permit and for my own personal convenience, I was not prepared to ask a favour of the Permit Officer.

I was at my wits' end. Arrears were fast mounting up, so much so that it seemed impossible for me, however much I might try, to cope with professional and public work. I was quite willing to engage a European clerk, but I was not sure to get a white man or woman to serve a coloured man like myself. However I decided to try. I approached a typewriter's agent whom I knew, and asked him to get me a stenographer. There were girls available, and he promised to try to secure the services of one. He came across a Scotch girl called Miss Dick, who had just come fresh from Scotland. She had no objection to earning an honest livelihood, wherever available, and she was in need. So the agent sent her on to me. She immediately prepossessed me.

'Don't you mind serving under an Indian?' I asked her.

'Not at all,' was her firm reply.

'What salary do you expect?'

'Would £17/10 be too much?'

'Not too much, if you will give me the work I want from you. When can you join?'

'This moment, if you wish.'

I was very pleased and straightaway started dictating letters to her.

Before very long she became more a daughter or a sister to me than a mere stenotypist. I had scarcely any reason to find fault with her work. She was often entrusted with the management of funds amounting to thousands of pounds, and she was in charge of account books. She won my complete confidence, but what was perhaps more, she confided to me her innermost thoughts and feelings. She sought my advice in the final choice of her husband, and I had the privilege to give her away in marriage. As soon as Miss Dick became Mrs. Macdonald, she had to leave me, but even after her marriage she did not fail to respond whenever under pressure I made a call upon her.

But a permanent stenotypist was now needed in her place, and I was fortunate in getting another girl. She was Miss Schlesin introduced to me by Mr. Kallenbach whom the reader will know in due course. She is at present a teacher in one of the High Schools in the Transvaal. She was about seventeen when she came to me. Some of her idiosyncrasies were at times too much for Mr. Kallenbach and me. She had come less to work as a stenotypist than to gain experience. Colour prejudice was foreign to her temperament. She seemed to mind neither age nor experience. She would not hesitate even to the point of insulting a man and telling him to his face what she thought of him. Her impetuosity often landed me in difficulties, but her open and guileless temperament removed them as soon as they were created. I have often signed without revision letters typed by her, as I considered her English to be better than mine, and had the fullest confidence in her loyalty.

Her sacrifice was great. For a considerable period she did not draw more than £ 6, and refused ever to receive more than £ 10 a month. When I urged her to take more, she would give me a scolding and say, 'I am not here to draw a salary from you. I am here, because I like to work with you and I like your ideals.'

She had once an occasion to take £ 40 from me, but she insisted on having it as a loan, and repaid the full amount last year. Her courage was equal to her sacrifice. She is one of the few women I have been privileged to come across, with a character as clear as crystal and courage that would shame a warrior. She is a grown up woman now. I do not know her mind quite as well as when she was with me, but my contact with this young lady will ever be for me a sacred recollection. I would therefore be false to truth if I kept back what I know about her.

She knew neither night nor day in toiling for the cause. She ventured out

on errands in the darkness of the night all by herself, and angrily scouted any suggestion of an escort. Thousands of stalwart Indians looked up to her for guidance. When during the Satyagraha days almost every one of the leaders was in jail, she led the movement single-handed. She had the management of thousands, a tremendous amount of correspondence, and *Indian Opinion* in her hands, but she never wearied.

I could go on thus indefinitely writing about Miss Schlesin, but I shall conclude this chapter with citing Gokhale's estimate of her. Gokhale knew every one of my co-workers. He was pleased with many of them, and would often give his opinion of them. He gave the first place to Miss Schlesin amongst all the Indian and European co-workers. 'I have rarely met with the sacrifice, the purity and the fearlessness I have seen in Miss Schlesin,' said he. 'Amongst your co-workers, she takes the first place in my estimation.'

CHAPTER XIII

'INDIAN OPINION'

BEFORE I proceed with the other intimate European contacts, I must note two or three items of importance. One of the contacts, however, should be mentioned at once. The appointment of Miss Dick was not enough for my purpose. I needed more assistance. I have in the earlier chapters referred to Mr. Ritch. I knew him well. He was manager in a commercial firm. He approved my suggestion of leaving the firm and getting articled under me, and he considerably lightened my burden.

About this time Sjt. Madanjit approached me with a proposal to start *Indian*

Opinion and sought my advice. He had already been conducting a press, and I approved of his proposal. The journal was launched in 1904, and Sjt. Mansukhlal Nazar became the first editor. But I had to bear the brunt of the work, having for most of the time to be practically in charge of the journal. Not that Sjt. Mansukhlal could not carry it on. He had been doing a fair amount of journalism whilst in India, but he would never venture to write on intricate South African problems so long as I was there. He had the greatest confidence in my discernment, and therefore threw on me the responsibility of attending to the editorial columns. The journal has been until this day a weekly. In the beginning it used to be issued in Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil and English. I saw, however, that the Tamil and Hindi sections were a make-believe. They did not serve the purpose for which they were intended, so I discontinued them as I even felt that there would be a certain

amount of deception involved in their continuance.

I had no notion that I should have to invest any money in this journal, but I soon discovered that it could not go on without my financial help. The Indians and the Europeans both knew that though I was not nominally the editor of *Indian Opinion*, I was virtually responsible for its conduct. It would not have mattered if the journal had never been started, but to stop it after it had once been launched would have been both a loss and a disgrace. So I kept on pouring out my money, until ultimately I was practically sinking all my savings in it. I remember a time when I had to remit £ 75 each month.

But after all these years I feel that the journal has served the community well. It was never intended to be a commercial concern. So long as it was under my control, the changes in the journal were indicative of changes in my life. *Indian Opinion* in those days like

Young India and *Navajivan* today, was a mirror of part of my life. Week after week I poured out my soul in its columns, and expounded the principles and practice of Satyagraha as I understood it. During ten years, that is, until 1914, excepting the intervals of my enforced rest in prison, there was hardly an issue of *Indian Opinion* without an article from me. I cannot recall a word in those articles set down without thought or deliberation, or a word of conscious exaggeration, or anything merely to please. Indeed the journal had become for me a training in self-restraint, and for friends a medium through which to keep in touch with my thoughts. The critic found very little to which he could object. In fact I know that the tone of *Indian Opinion* compelled the critic to put a curb on his own pen. Satyagraha would probably have been impossible without *Indian Opinion.* The readers looked forward to it for a trustworthy account of the Satyagraha campaign as

also of the real condition of Indians in South Africa. For me it became a means for the study of human nature in all its casts and shades, as I always aimed at establishing an intimate and clean bond between the editor and the readers. I was inundated with letters containing the outpourings of my correspondents' hearts. They were friendly, critical or bitter, according to the temper of the writer. It was a fine education for me to study, digest and answer all this correspondence. It was as though the community thought audibly through this correspondence with me. It made me thoroughly understand the responsibility of a journalist, and the hold I secured in this way over the community made the future campaign workable, dignified and irresistible.

In the very first month of *Indian Opinion*, I had realised that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops,

even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many of the journals in the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? And who should be the judge? The useful and the useless must, like good and evil, go on together, and man must make his choice.

CHAPTER XIV

COOLIE LOCATIONS OR GHETTOES ?

SOME of the classes which render us the greatest social service, and which we Hindus have chosen to regard as 'untouchables,' are relegated to remote quarters of a town or a village, called in Gujarati *dhedhvado* and the name has acquired a bad odour. Even so in Christian Europe the Jews were once its 'untouchables,' and the quarters that were assigned to them had the offensive name of 'ghettoes.' In a similar way today we have become the untouchables of South Africa. It remains to be seen how far the sacrifice of Andrews and the magic wand of Shastri succeed in rehabilitating us.

The ancient Jews regarded themselves as the chosen people of God, to the exclusion of all others, with the result that their descendants were visited with a strange and even unjust retribution. Almost in a similar way the Hindus have considered themselves *Aryas* or civilised, and a section of their own kith and kin as *Anaryas* or untouchables, with the result that a strange, if unjust, nemesis is being visited not only upon the Hindus in South Africa, but the Musalmans and Parsis as well, inasmuch as they belong to the same country and have the same colour as their Hindu brethren.

The reader will have now realised to some extent the meaning of the word 'locations' with which I have headed this chapter. In South Africa we have acquired the odious name of 'coolies.' The word 'coolie' in India means only a porter or carrier, but in South Africa it has a contemptuous connotation. It means what a pariah or an untouchable means to us, and the quarters assigned to the

'coolies' are known as 'coolie locations.' Johannesburg had one such location, but unlike the other places where there were locations and where the Indians had tenancy rights, in the Johannesburg location the Indians had acquired their plots on a lease of 99 years. People were densely packed in the location, the area of which never increased with the increase in population. Beyond arranging to clean the latrines in the location in a haphazard way, the Municipality did nothing to provide any sanitary facilities, much less good roads or lights. It was hardly likely that it would safeguard its sanitation, when it was indifferent to the welfare of the people. The Indians living there were too ignorant of the rules of municipal sanitation and hygiene to do without the help or supervision of the Municipality. If those who went there had all been Robinson Crusoes theirs would have been a different story. But we do not know of a single emigrant colony of Robinson Crusoes in the world.

Usually people migrate abroad in search of wealth and trade, and the bulk of the Indians who went to South Africa were ignorant, pauper agriculturists who needed all the care and protection that could be given them. The traders and educated Indians who followed them were very few.

The criminal negligence of the Municipality and the ignorance of the Indian settlers thus conspired to render the location thoroughly insanitary. The Municipality, far from doing anything to improve the condition of the location, used the insanitation, caused by their own neglect, as a lever for destroying the location, and for that purpose obtained from the local legislature authority to dispossess the settlers. This was the condition of things when I settled in Johannesburg.

The settlers, having proprietary rights in their land, were naturally entitled to compensation. A special tribunal was appointed to try the land acquisition

cases. If the tenant was not prepared to accept the offer of the Municipality he had a right to appeal to the tribunal, and if the latter's award exceeded the Municipality's offer, the Municipality had to bear the costs.

Most of the tenants had engaged me as their legal adviser. I had no desire to make money out of these cases, so I told the tenants that I should be satisfied with whatever costs the tribunal awarded, in case they won, and a fee of £ 10 on every lease, irrespective of the result of the case. I also told them that I proposed to set apart half of the money paid by them for the building of a hospital or similar institution for the poor. This naturally pleased them all.

Out of about 70 cases only one was lost. So the fees amounted to a fairly big figure. But *Indian Opinion* was there with its persistent claim and devoured, so far as I can recollect, a sum of £ 1,600. I had worked hard for these cases. The clients always

surrounded me. Most of them were originally indentured labourers from Bihar and its neighbourhood and from South India. For the redress of their peculiar grievances they had formed an association of their own, separate from that of the free Indian merchants and traders. Some of them were open-hearted, liberal men of high character. Their leaders were Sjt. Jairamsing, the president, and Sjt. Badri, who was as good as the president. Both of them are now no more. They were exceedingly helpful to me. Sjt. Badri came in very close contact with me and took a prominent part in Satyagraha. Through these and other friends I came in intimate contact with numerous Indian settlers of North and South India. I became more their brother than a mere legal adviser, and shared in all their private and public sorrows and hardships.

It may be of some interest to know how the Indians used to name me. Abdulla Sheth refused to address me as

Gandhi. None, fortunately, ever insulted me by calling or regarding me as 'saheb.' Abdulla Sheth hit upon a fine appellation —'bhai,' *i. e.,* brother. Others copied him and continued to address me as 'bhai' until the moment I left South Africa, but there was a still sweeter flavour about the name when it was used by the ex-indentured Indians.

CHAPTER XV

THE BLACK PLAGUE — I

THE Indians were not removed from the location as soon as the Municipality secured its ownership. It was necessary to find the residents suitable new quarters before dispossessing them, but as the Municipality could not easily do this the Indians were suffered to stay in the same 'dirty' location, with this difference, that their condition became worse than before. Having ceased to be proprietors they became tenants of the Municipality, with the result that their surroundings became more insanitary than ever. When they were proprietors, they had to maintain some sort of cleanliness,

if only for fear of the law. The Municipality had no such fear! The number of tenants increased, and with them the squalor and the disorder.

While the Indians were fretting over this state of things, there was a sudden outbreak of the black plague, also called the pneumonic plague, more terrible and fatal than the bubonic.

Fortunately, it was not the location but one of the gold mines in the vicinity of Johannesburg that was responsible for the outbreak. The workers in this mine were for the most part Negroes, for whose cleanliness their white employers were solely responsible. There were a few Indians also working in connection with the mine, twenty-three of whom suddenly caught the infection, and returned one evening to their quarters in the location with an acute attack of the plague. Sjt. Madanjit, who was then going about canvassing subscribers for *Indian Opinion* and realising subscriptions, happened to be in the location at this moment. He

was a remarkably fearless man. His heart wept to see these victims of the scourge, and he sent a pencil-note to me to the following effect: 'There has been a sudden outbreak of the black plague. You must come immediately and take prompt measures, otherwise we must be prepared for dire consequences. Please come immediately.'

Sjt. Madanjit bravely broke open the lock of a vacant house, and put all the patients there. I cycled to the location, and wrote to the Town Clerk to inform him of the circumstances in which we had taken possession of the house.

Dr. William Godfrey, who was practising in Johannesburg, ran to the rescue as soon as he got the news, and became both nurse and doctor to the patients. But twenty-three patients were more than three of us could cope with.

It is my faith, based on experience, that if one's heart is pure, calamity brings in its train men and measures to fight it. I had at that time four Indians

in my office,— Sjts. Kalyandas, Maneklal, Gunvantrai Desai and another whose name I cannot recollect. Kalyandas had been entrusted to me by his father. I have rarely come across in South Africa any one more obliging and willing to render implicit obedience than Kalyandas. He was fortunately unmarried then, and I therefore did not hesitate to impose on him duties involving risks, however great. Maneklal I had secured in Johannesburg. He too, so far as I can remember, was unmarried. So I decided to sacrifice all four — call them clerks, co-workers or sons. There was no need at all to consult Kalyandas. The others expressed their readiness as soon as they were asked. 'Where you are, we will also be,' was their short and sweet reply.

Mr. Ritch had a large family. He was ready to take the plunge, but I prevented him. I had not the heart to expose him to the risk. So he attended to the work outside the danger zone.

It was a terrible night — that night of vigil and nursing. I had nursed a number of patients before, but never any attacked by the black plague. Dr. Godfrey's pluck proved infectious. There was not much nursing required. To give them their doses of medicine, to attend to their wants, to keep them and their beds clean and tidy, and to cheer them up was all that we had to do.

The indefatigable zeal and fearlessness with which the youths worked rejoiced me beyond measure. One could understand the bravery of Dr. Godfrey and of an experienced man like Sjt. Madanjit. But oh for the spirit of these callow youths!

So far as I can recollect, we pulled all the patients through that night.

But the whole incident, apart from its pathos, is of such absorbing interest, and for me, of such religious value, that I must devote to it at least two more chapters.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BLACK PLAGUE — II

THE Town Clerk expressed his gratitude to me for having taken charge of the vacant house and the patients. He frankly confessed that the Town Council had no immediate means to cope with such an emergency but promised that they would render all the help in their power. Once awakened to a sense of their duty, the Municipality made no delay in taking prompt measures.

The next day they placed a vacant godown at my disposal, and suggested that the patients be removed there, but the Municipality did not undertake to clean the premises. The building was

unkempt and unclean. We cleaned it up ourselves, raised a few beds and other necessaries through the offices of charitable Indians, and improvised a temporary hospital. The Municipality lent the services of a nurse, who came with brandy and other hospital equipment. Dr. Godfrey still remained in charge.

The nurse was a kindly lady and would fain have attended to the patients, but we rarely allowed her to touch them, lest she should catch the contagion.

We had instructions to give the patients frequent doses of brandy. The nurse even asked us to take it for precaution, just as she was doing herself. But none of us would touch it. I had no faith in its beneficial effect even for the patients. With the permission of Dr. Godfrey, I put three patients, who were prepared to do without brandy, under the earth treatment, applying wet earth bandages to their heads and chests.

Two of these were saved. The other twenty died in the godown.

Meanwhile the Municipality was busy taking other measures. There was a lazaretto for contagious diseases about seven miles from Johannesburg. The two surviving patients were removed to tents near the lazaretto, and arrangements were made for sending any fresh cases there. We were thus relieved of our work.

In the course of a few days we learnt that the good nurse had had an attack and immediately succumbed. It is impossible to say how the two patients were saved and how we remained immune, but the experience enhanced my faith in earth treatment, as also my diffidence in the efficacy of brandy, even as a medicine. I know that neither this faith nor this diffidence is based upon any solid grounds, but I cannot efface the impression which I then received, and which I still retain, and I have therefore thought it necessary to take note of it here.

On the outbreak of the plague, I had addressed a strong letter to the press holding the Municipality guilty of negligence after the location came into its possession and responsible for the outbreak of the plague itself. This letter secured me Mr. Henry Polak, and was partly responsible for the friendship of the late Rev. Joseph Doke.

I have said in an earlier chapter, that I used to have my meals at a vegetarian restaurant. Here I met Mr. Albert West. We used to meet in this restaurant every evening and go out walking after dinner. Mr. West was a partner in a small printing concern. He read my letter in the press about the outbreak of the plague, and not finding me in the restaurant felt uneasy.

My co-workers and I had reduced our diet since the outbreak, as I had long made it a rule to go on a light diet during epidemics. In these days I had therefore given up my evening dinner. Lunch also I would finish before the other

guests arrived. I knew the proprietor of the restaurant very well, and I had informed him that as I was engaged in nursing the plague patients, I wanted to avoid the contact of friends as much as possible.

Not finding me in the restaurant for a day or two, Mr. West knocked at my door one early morning just as I was getting ready to go out for a walk. As I opened the door Mr. West said: 'I did not find you in the restaurant and was really afraid lest something might have happened to you. So I decided to come and see you in the morning in order to make sure of finding you at home. Well, here I am at your disposal. I am ready to help in nursing the patients. You know that I have no one depending on me.'

I expressed my gratitude, and without taking even a second to think, replied: 'I will not have you as a nurse. If there are no more cases, we shall be free in a day or two. There is one thing however.'

'Yes, what is it?'

'Could you take charge of the *Indian Opinion* press at Durban? Mr. Madanjit is likely to be engaged here, and some one is needed at Durban. If you could go, I should feel quite relieved on that score.'

'You know that I have a press. Most probably I shall be able to go, but may I give my final reply in the evening? We shall talk it over during our evening walk.'

I was delighted. We had the talk. He agreed to go. Salary was no consideration to him, as money was not his motive. But a salary of £10 per month and a part of the profits, if any, was fixed up. The very next day Mr. West left for Durban by the evening mail, entrusting me with the recovery of his dues. From that day until the time I left the shores of South Africa, he remained a partner of my joys and sorrows.

Mr. West belonged to a peasant family in Louth (Linconshire). He had had an

ordinary school education, but had learnt a good deal in the school of experience and by dint of self-help. I have always known him to be a pure, sober, God-fearing, humane Englishman.

We shall know more of him and his family in the chapters to follow.

CHAPTER XVII

LOCATION IN FLAMES

THOUGH my co-workers and I were relieved of the charge of the patients, there remained many things arising out of the black plague still to be dealt with.

I have referred to the negligence of the Municipality regarding the location. But it was wide awake so far as the health of its white citizens was concerned. It had spent large amounts for the preservation of their health and now it poured forth money like water in order to stamp out the plague. In spite of the many sins of omission and commission against the Indians that I had laid at

the door of the Municipality, I could not help commending its solicitude for the white citizens, and I rendered it as much help as I could in its laudable efforts. I have an impression, that if I had withheld my co-operation, the task would have been more difficult for the Municipality, and that it would not have hesitated to use armed force and do its worst.

But all that was averted. The Municipal authorities were pleased at the Indians' behaviour and much of the future work regarding plague measures was simplified. I used all the influence I could command with the Indians to make them submit to the requirements of the Municipality. It was far from easy for the Indians to go all that length, but I do not remember any one having resisted my advice.

The location was put under a strong guard, passage in and out being made impossible without permission. My co-workers and I had free permits of entry and exit. The decision was to make

the whole location population vacate, and live under canvas for three weeks in an open plain about thirteen miles from Johannesburg, and then to set fire to the location. To settle down under canvas with provisions and other necessaries was bound to take some time, and a guard became necessary during the interval.

The people were in a terrible fright, but my constant presence was a consolation to them. Many of the poor people used to hoard their scanty savings underground. This had to be unearthed. They had no bank, they knew none. I became their banker. Streams of money poured into my office. I could not possibly charge any fees for my labours in such a crisis. I coped with the work somehow. My bank manager I knew very well. I told him that I should have to deposit with him these moneys. The banks were by no means anxious to accept large amounts of copper and silver. There was also the fear of bank clerks refusing to touch money coming from a

plague-affected area. But the manager accommodated me in every way. It was decided to disinfect all the money before sending it to the bank. So far as I can remember nearly sixty thousand pounds were thus deposited. I advised such of the people as had enough money to place it as fixed deposit, and they accepted the advice. The result was some of them became accustomed to invest their money in banks.

The location residents were removed by special train to Klipspruit Farm near Johannesburg, where they were supplied with provisions by the Municipality at public expense. This city under canvas looked like a military camp. The people who were unaccustomed to this camp life were distressed and astonished over the arrangements, but they did not have to put up with any particular inconvenience. I used to cycle out to them daily. Within twenty four hours of their stay they forgot all their misery and began to live merrily. Whenever I went there

I found them enjoying themselves with song and mirth. Three weeks' stay in the open air evidently improved their health.

So far as I recollect the location was put to the flames on the very next day after its evacuation. The Municipality showed not the slightest inclination to save anything from the conflagration. About this very time, and for the same reason, the Municipality burnt down all its timber in the market, and sustained a loss of some ten thousand pounds. The reason for this drastic step was the discovery of some dead rats in the market.

The Municipality had to incur heavy expenditure, but it successfully arrested the further progress of the plague, and the city once more breathed freely.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MAGIC SPELL OF A BOOK

THE black plague enhanced my influence with the poor Indians, and increased my business and my responsibility. Some of the new contacts with Europeans became so close that they added considerably to my moral obligations.

I made the acquaintance of Mr. Polak in the vegetarian restaurant, just as I had made that of Mr. West. One evening a young man dining at a table a little way off sent me his card expressing a desire to see me. I invited him to come to my table, which he did.

'I am sub-editor of the *Critic*,' he said. 'When I read your letter to the

press about the plague, I felt a strong desire to see you. I am glad to have this opportunity.'

Mr. Polak's candour drew me to him. The same evening we got to know each other and we seemed to hold closely similar views on the essential things of life. He liked simple life. He had a wonderful faculty of translating into practice anything that appealed to his intellect. Some of the changes that he had made in his life were as prompt as they were radical.

Indian Opinion was getting more and more expensive every day. The very first report from Mr. West was alarming. He wrote: 'I do not expect the concern to yield the profit that you had thought probable. I am afraid there may be even a loss. The books are not in order. There are heavy arrears to be recovered, but one cannot make head or tail of them. Considerable overhauling will have to be done. But all this need not alarm you. I shall try to put things right as

best I can. I remain on, whether there is profit or not.'

Mr. West might have left when he discovered that there was no profit, and I could not have blamed him. In fact, he had a right to arraign me for having described the concern as profitable without proper proof. But he never so much as uttered one word of complaint. I have, however, an impression that this discovery led Mr. West to regard me as credulous. I had simply accepted Sjt. Madanjit's estimate, without caring to examine it, and told Mr. West to expect a profit.

I now realise that a public worker should not make statements of which he has not made himself sure. Above all, a votary of truth must exercise the greatest caution. To allow a man to believe a thing which one has not fully verified is to compromise truth. I am pained to have to confess, that in spite of this knowledge, I have not quite conquered my credulous habit for which

my ambition to do more work than I can manage is responsible. This ambition has often been a source of worry more to my co-workers than to myself.

On receipt of Mr. West's letter I left for Natal. I had taken Mr. Polak into my fullest confidence. He came to see me off at the station, and left with me a book to read during the journey, which he said I should be sure to like. It was Ruskin's *Unto this Last.*

The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty four hours' journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book.

This was the first book of Ruskin I had ever read. During the days of my education I had read practically nothing outside text-books, and after I launched into active life I had very little time left me for reading. I cannot therefore claim

much book knowledge. However I believe I have not lost much because of this enforced restraint. On the contrary, the limited reading may be said to have enabled me thoroughly to digest what I did read. Of these books, the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto this Last.* I translated it later into Gujarati entitling it *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all).

I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life. A poet is one who can call forth the good latent in the human breast. Poets do not influence all alike, for every one is not evolved in an equal measure.

The teachings of *Unto this Last* I understood to be:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all

have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

3. That a life of labour, *i. e.*, the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.

The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realised. The third had never occurred to me. *Unto this Last* made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PHŒNIX SETTLEMENT

I talked over the whole thing with Mr. West, described to him the effect *Unto this Last* had produced on my mind, and proposed that *Indian Opinion* should be removed to a farm, on which every one should labour, drawing the same living wage, and attending to the press work in spare time. Mr. West approved of the proposal, and £ 3 was laid down as the monthly allowance per head, irrespective of colour or nationality.

But it was a question whether all the ten or more workers in the press would agree to go and settle on an out of the way farm, and be satisfied with bare

maintenance. We therefore proposed that those who could not fit in with the scheme should continue to draw their salaries and gradually try to reach the ideal of becoming members of the settlement.

I talked to the workers in the terms of this proposal. It did not appeal to Sjt. Madanjit, who considered my proposal to be foolish and held that it would ruin a venture on which he had staked his all; that the workers would bolt, *Indian Opinion* would come to a stop, and the press would have to be closed down.

Among the men working in the press was Chhaganlal Gandhi, one of my cousins. I had put the proposal to him at the same time as to West. He had a wife and children, but he had from childhood chosen to be trained and to work under me. He had full faith in me. So without any argument he agreed to the scheme and has been with me ever since. The machinist Govindswami

also fell in with the proposal. The rest did not join the scheme, but agreed to go wherever I removed the press.

I do not think I took more than two days to fix up these matters with the men. Thereafter I at once advertised for a piece of land situated near a railway station in the vicinity of Durban. An offer came in respect of Phœnix. Mr. West and I went to inspect the estate, and within a week purchased twenty acres of land. It had a nice little spring and a few orange and mango trees. Adjoining it was a piece of 80 acres which had many more fruit trees and a dilapidated cottage. We purchased this too, the total cost being a thousand pounds.

The late Mr. Rustomji always supported me in such enterprises. He liked the project. He placed at my disposal second-hand corrugated iron sheets of a big godown and other building material, with which we started work. Some Indian carpenters and masons, who had worked

with me in the Boer War, helped me in erecting a shed for the press. This structure, which was 75 feet long and 50 feet broad, was ready in less than a month. Mr. West and others, at great personal risk, stayed with the carpenters and masons. The place, which was uninhabited, and thickly overgrown with grass, was infested with snakes, and was obviously dangerous to live in. At first all lived under canvas. We carted most of our things to Phœnix in about a week. It was fourteen miles from Durban, and two and a half miles from Phœnix station.

Only one issue of *Indian Opinion* had to be printed outside, in the *Mercury* press.

I now endeavoured to draw to Phœnix those relations and friends who had come with me from India to try their fortune, and who were engaged in business of various kinds. They had come in search of wealth and it was therefore difficult to persuade them, but some agreed.

Of these I can single out here only Maganlal Gandhi's name. The others went back to business. Maganlal Gandhi left his business for good to cast in his lot with me, and by his ability, sacrifice and devotion he stands foremost among my original co-workers in my ethical experiments, and as a self-taught handicraftsman his place among them is unique.

Thus the Phœnix Settlement was started in 1904, and in spite of numerous odds *Indian Opinion* continues to be published at the Settlement.

But the initial difficulties, the changes made, the hopes and the disappointments demand a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XX

THE FIRST NIGHT

IT was no easy thing to issue the first number of *Indian Opinion* from Phœnix. Had I not taken two precautions, the first issue would have had to be dropped or delayed. The idea of having an engine to work the press had not appealed to me. I had thought that hand-power would be more in keeping with an atmosphere where agricultural work was also to be done by hand. But as it had not appeared feasible, we had installed an oil-engine. I had however suggested to West to have something handy to fall back upon in case the engine failed. He had therefore arranged a wheel which

could be worked by hand. The size of the paper had been that of a daily which was considered unsuitable for an out of the way place like Phœnix. It was therefore reduced to foolscap size, so that, in case of emergency, copies might be struck off with the help of a treadle.

In the initial stages, we all had to keep late hours before the day of publication. Every one, young and old, had to help in folding the sheets, and we usually finished our work between ten o'clock and midnight. But the first night was unforgettable. The pages were locked but the engine refused to work. We had got out an engineer from Durban to put up the engine and set it going. He and West tried their hardest, but to no avail. Every one was anxious. West, in despair, at last came to me, with tears in his eyes, and said, 'The engine will not work, and I am afraid we cannot issue the paper in time.'

'If that is the case, we cannot help it. But it is no use shedding tears over it.

Let us do whatever else it is humanly possible to do. What about the handwheel?' I said, comforting him.

'Where have we the men to work it?' he replied. 'We are not enough to cope with the job. It requires relays of four men each, and our own men are all tired.'

Building work had not yet been finished, and so the carpenters were still with us. They were sleeping on the press floor. I said pointing to them, 'But can't we make use of these carpenters? And we may have a whole night of work. I think this device is still open to us.'

'I dare not wake up the carpenters. And our men are really too tired,' said West.

'Well, that's for me to negotiate,' said I.

'Then it is possible that we may get through the work,' West replied.

I woke up the carpenters and requested their cooperation. They needed no pressure. They said, 'If we cannot

be called upon in an emergency what use are we? You rest yourselves and we will work the wheel. For us it is easy work.' Our own men were of course ready.

West was greatly delighted and started singing a hymn as we set to work. I partnered the carpenters, all the rest joined turn by turn, and thus we went on until 7 a. m. There was still a good deal to do. I therefore suggested to West that the engineer might now be asked to get up and try again to start the engine, so that if we succeeded we might finish in time.

West woke him up, and he immediately went into the engine room. And lo and behold! the engine worked almost as soon as he touched it. The whole press rang with peals of joy. 'How can this be? How is it that all our labours last night were of no avail, and this morning it has been set going as though there were nothing wrong with it?' I enquired.

'It is difficult to say,' said West or the engineer, I forget which. 'Machines also sometimes seem to behave as though they required rest like us.'

For me, the failure of the engine had come as a test for us all, and its working in the nick of time the fruit of our honest and earnest labours.

The copies were despatched in time, and every one was happy.

This initial insistence ensured regularity of the paper, and created an atmosphere of self-reliance in Phœnix. There came a time when we deliberately gave up the use of the engine and worked with hand-power only. Those were, to my mind, the days of the highest moral uplift for Phœnix.

CHAPTER XXI

POLAK TAKES THE PLUNGE

IT has always been my regret that although I started the Settlement at Phœnix I could stay there only for brief intervals. My original idea had been gradually to retire from practice, go and live at the Settlement, earn my livelihood by manual work there, and find the joy of service in the fulfilment of Phœnix. But it was not to be. I have found in my experience that man makes his plans to be often upset by God, but I have also found that where the ultimate goal is the search of truth, no matter how a man's plans are frustrated, the issue is never injurious and is often better

than anticipated. The unexpected turn that Phœnix took and the unexpected happenings were certainly not injurious, though it is difficult to say that they were better than our original expectations.

In order to enable every one of us to make a living by manual labour, we parcelled out the land round the press in pieces of three acres each. One of these fell to my lot. On all these plots we, in spite of ourselves, built houses with corrugated iron. Our desire had been to have mud huts thatched with straw or small brick houses such as would become ordinary peasants, but it could not be. They would have been more expensive and would have meant more time, and every one was eager to settle down as soon as possible.

The editor was still Mansukhlal Nazar. He had not accepted the new scheme and was directing the paper from Durban where there was a branch office for *Indian Opinion*. Though we had paid

compositors, the idea was for every member of the settlement to learn type-setting, the easiest, if the most tedious, of the processes in a printing press. Those, therefore who did not already know the work, learnt it. I remained a dunce to the last and Maganlal Gandhi surpassed us all. Though he had never before worked in a press, he became an expert compositor and not only achieved great speed, but to my agreeable surprise, quickly mastered all the other branches of press work. I have always thought that he himself was not conscious of his own capacity.

We had hardly settled down, the buildings were hardly ready, when I had to leave the newly constructed nest and go to Johannesburg. I was not in a position to allow the work there to remain without attention for any length of time.

On return to Johannesburg, I informed Polak of the important changes I had made. His joy knew no bounds when he

learnt that the loan of his book had been so fruitful. 'Is it not possible,' he asked, 'for me to take part in the new venture?' 'Certainly,' said I. 'You may if you like join the Settlement.' 'I am quite ready,' he replied, 'if you will admit me.'

His determination captured me. He gave a month's notice to his chief to be relieved from the *Critic*, and reached Phœnix in due course. By his sociability he won the hearts of all and soon became a member of the family. Simplicity was so much in his grain that far from feeling the life at Phœnix in any way strange or hard, he took to it like a duck to the water. But I could not keep him there long. Mr. Ritch had decided to finish his legal studies in England, and it was impossible for me to bear the burden of the office single-handed, so I suggested to Polak that he should join the office and qualify as an attorney. I had thought that ultimately both of us would retire and settle at Phœnix, but that never came to pass. Polak's was such a trustful

nature that when he reposed his confidence in a friend he would try to agree with him instead of arguing with him. He wrote to me from Phœnix saying that though he loved the life there, was perfectly happy, and had hopes of developing the Settlement, still he was ready to leave and join the office to qualify as an attorney if I thought that thereby we would more quickly realise our ideals. I heartily welcomed the letter. Polak left Phœnix, came to Johannesburg and signed his articles with me.

About the same time a Scotch Theosophist, whom I had been coaching for a local legal examination, also joined as an articled clerk, on my inviting him to follow Polak's example. His name was Mr. MacIntyre.

Thus, with the laudable object of quickly realising the ideals at Phœnix, I seemed to be going deeper and deeper into a contrary current, and had God not willed otherwise, I should have found

myself entrapped in this net spread in the name of simple life.

It will take a few more chapters before I describe how I and my ideals were saved in a way no one had imagined or expected.

CHAPTER XXII

WHOM GOD PROTECTS

I had now given up all hope of returning to India in the near future. I had promised my wife that I would return home within a year. The year was gone without any prospect of my return, and so I decided to send for her and the children.

On the boat bringing them to South Africa, Ramdas, my third son, had broken his arm while playing with the ship's captain. The captain had looked after him well and had had him attended to by the ship's doctor. Ramdas therefore landed with his hand in a sling. The doctor had advised, that as soon as

we reached home, the wound should be dressed by a qualified doctor. But this was the time when I was full of faith in my experiments in earth treatment. I had even succeeded in persuading some of my clients who had faith in my quackery to try the earth and water treatment.

What then was I to do for Ramdas? He was just eight years old. I asked him if he would mind my dressing his wound. With a smile he said he did not mind at all. It was not possible for him at that age to decide what was the best thing for him, but he knew very well the distinction between quackery and proper medical treatment. And he knew my habit of home treatment and had faith enough to trust himself to me. In fear and trembling I undid the bandage, washed the wound, applied a clean earth poultice and tied the arm up again. This sort of dressing went on daily for about a month until the wound was completely healed. There was no hitch, and the wound took no more time to heal than

the ship's doctor had said it would do under the usual treatment.

This, and other experiments, enhanced my faith in such household remedies, and I now proceeded with them with more self-confidence. I widened the sphere of their application, trying the earth and water and fasting treatment in cases of wounds, fevers, dyspepsia, jaundice, and other complaints, with success on most occasions. But nowadays I have not the confidence I had in South Africa, and experience has even shown that these experiments involve obvious risks.

The reference here, therefore, to these experiments is not meant to demonstrate their success. I cannot claim complete success for any experiment. Even medical men can make no such claim about their experiments. My object is only to show that he who would go in for novel experiments must begin with himself. That leads to a quicker discovery of truth, and God always protects the honest experimenter.

The risks involved in experiments in cultivating intimate contacts with Europeans were as grave as those in the nature cure experiments. Only those risks were of a different kind. But in cultivating those contacts, I never so much as thought of the risks.

I invited Polak to come and stay with me, and we began to live like blood brothers. Mrs. Polak and he had been engaged for some years, but the marriage had been postponed for a propitious time. I have an impression that Polak wanted to put some money by before he settled down to a married life. He knew Ruskin much better than I, but his Western surroundings were a bar against his translating Ruskin's teaching immediately into practice. But I pleaded with him: 'When there is a heart union, as in your case, it is hardly right to postpone marriage merely for financial considerations. If poverty is a bar, poor men can never marry. And then you are now staying with me. There is no

question of household expenses. I think you should get married as soon as possible.' As I have said in a previous chapter, I had never to argue a thing twice with Polak. He appreciated the force of my argument, and immediately opened correspondence on the subject with Mrs. Polak, who was then in England. She gladly accepted the proposal and in a few months reached Johannesburg. Any expense over the wedding was out of the question, not even a special dress was thought necessary. They needed no religious rites to seal the bond. Mrs. Polak was a Christian by birth and Polak a Jew. Their common religion was the religion of ethics.

I may mention in passing an amusing incident in connection with this wedding. The Registrar of European marriages in the Transvaal could not register marriages between black or coloured people. In the wedding in question, I acted as the best man. Not that we could not have got a European friend

for the purpose, but Polak would not brook the suggestion. So we three went to the Registrar of marriages. How could he be sure that the parties to a marriage in which I acted as the best man would be whites? He proposed to postpone registration pending inquiries. The next day was a Sunday. The day following was New Year's Day, a public holiday. To postpone the date of a solemnly arranged wedding on such a flimsy pretext was more than one could put up with. I knew the Chief Magistrate, who was head of the Registration Department. So I appeared before him with the couple. He laughed and gave me a note to the Registrar, and the marriage was duly registered.

Up to now the Europeans living with us had been more or less known to me before. But now an English lady who was an utter stranger to us entered the family. I do not remember our ever having had a difference with the newly married couple, but even if Mrs. Polak

and my wife had had some unpleasant experiences they would have been no more than what happen in the best regulated homogeneous families. And let it be remembered that mine would be considered an essentially heterogeneous family, where people of all kinds and temperaments were freely admitted. When we come to think of it, the distinction between heterogeneous and homogeneous is discovered to be merely imaginary. We are all one family.

I had better celebrate West's wedding also in this chapter. At this stage of my life, my ideas about *brahmacharya* had not fully matured, and so I was interesting myself in getting all my bachelor friends married. When, in due course, West made a pilgrimage to Louth to see his parents, I advised him to return married if possible. Phœnix was the common home, and as we were all supposed to have become farmers, we were not afraid of marriage and its usual consequences. West returned with

Mrs. West, a beautiful young lady from Leicester. She came of a family of shoemakers working in a Leicester factory. Mrs. West had herself some experience of work in this factory. I have called her beautiful, because it was her moral beauty that at once attracted me. True beauty after all consists in purity of heart. With Mr. West had come his mother-in-law too. The old lady is still alive. She put us all to shame by her industry and her buoyant, cheerful nature.

In the same way as I persuaded these European friends to marry, I encouraged the Indian friends to send for their families from home. Phœnix thus developed into a little village, half a dozen families having come and settled and begun to increase there.

CHAPTER XXIII

A PEEP INTO THE HOUSEHOLD

IT has already been seen, that though household expenses were heavy, the tendency towards simplicity began in Durban. But the Johannesburg house came in for much severer overhauling in the light of Ruskin's teaching.

I introduced as much simplicity as was possible in a barrister's house. It was impossible to do without a certain amount of furniture. The change was more internal than external. The liking for doing personally all the physical labour increased. I therefore began to bring my children also under that discipline.

Instead of buying baker's bread, we began to prepare unleavened wholemeal bread at home according to Kuhne's recipe. Common mill flour was no good for this, and the use of handground flour, it was thought, would ensure more simplicity, health and economy. So I purchased a hand-mill for £7. The iron wheel was too heavy to be tackled by one man, but easy for two. Polak and I and the children usually worked it. My wife also occasionally lent a hand, though the grinding hour was her usual time for commencing kitchen work. Mrs. Polak now joined us on her arrival. The grinding proved a very beneficial exercise for the children. Neither this nor any other work was ever imposed on them, but it was a pastime to them to come and lend a hand, and they were at liberty to break off whenever tired. But the children, including those whom I shall have occasion to introduce later, as a rule never failed me. Not that I had no laggards at all, but most did their

work cheerfully enough. I can recall few youngsters in those days fighting shy of work or pleading fatigue.

We had engaged a servant to look after the house. He lived with us as a member of the family, and the children used to help him in his work. The municipal sweeper removed the nightsoil, but we personally attended to the cleaning of the closet instead of asking or expecting the servant to do it. This proved a good training for the children. The result was that none of my sons developed any aversion for scavenger's work, and they naturally got a good grounding in general sanitation. There was hardly any illness in the home at Johannesburg, but whenever there was any, the nursing was willingly done by the children. I will not say that I was indifferent to their literary education, but I certainly did not hesitate to sacrifice it. My sons have therefore some reason for a grievance against me. Indeed they have occasionally given expression to it,

and I must plead guilty to a certain extent. The desire to give them a literary education was there. I even endeavoured to give it to them myself, but every now and then there was some hitch or other. As I had made no other arrangement for their private tuition, I used to get them to walk with me daily to the office and back home — a distance of about 5 miles in all. This gave them and me a fair amount of exercise. I tried to instruct them by conversation during these walks, if there was no one else claiming my attention. All my children, excepting the eldest, Harilal, who had stayed away in India, were brought up in Johannesburg in this manner. Had I been able to devote at least an hour to their literary education with strict regularity, I should have given them, in my opinion, an ideal education. But it has been their, as also my, regret that I failed to ensure them enough literary training. The eldest son has often given vent to his distress privately

before me and publicly in the press; the other sons have generously forgiven the failure as unavoidable. I am not heart-broken over it, and the regret, if any, is that I did not prove an ideal father. But I hold that I sacrificed their literary training to what I genuinely, though may be wrongly, believed to be service to the community. I am quite clear that I have not been negligent in doing whatever was needful for building up their character, and I believe it is the bounden duty of every parent to provide for this properly. Whenever, in spite of my endeavour, my sons have been found wanting, it is my certain conviction that they have reflected not want of care on my part but the defects of both their parents.

Children inherit the qualities of the parents, no less than their physical features. Environment does play an important part, but the original capital on which a child starts in life is inherited from its ancestors. I have also seen

children successfully surmounting the effects of an evil inheritance. That is due to purity being an inherent attribute of the soul.

Polak and I had often very heated discussions about the desirability or otherwise of giving the children an English education. It has always been my conviction that Indian parents, who train their children to think and talk in English from their infancy, betray their children and their country. They deprive them of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation, and render them to that extent unfit for the service of the country. Having these convictions, I made a point of always talking to my children in Gujarati. Polak never liked this. He thought I was spoiling their future. He contended, with all the vigour and love at his command, that if children were to learn a universal language like English from their infancy, they would easily gain considerable advance over others in the race of life.

He failed to convince me. I do not now remember whether I convinced him of the correctness of my attitude, or whether he gave me up as too obstinate. This happened about twenty years ago, and my convictions have only deepened with my experience. And though my sons have suffered for want of full literary education, the knowledge of the vernacular that they naturally acquired has been all to their and the country's good, inasmuch as they do not appear the foreigners they would otherwise have appeared. They naturally became bilingual, speaking and writing English with fair ease, because of daily contact with a large circle of English friends, and because of their stay in a country where English was the chief language spoken.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ZULU 'REBELLION'

EVEN after I thought I had settled down in Johannesburg there was to be no settled life for me. Just when I felt that I should be breathing in peace, an unexpected event happened. The papers brought the news of the outbreak of the Zulu 'rebellion' in Natal. I bore no grudge against the Zulus, they had harmed no Indian. I had doubts about the 'rebellion' itself, but I then believed that the British Empire existed for the welfare of the world. A genuine sense of loyalty prevented me from even wishing ill to the Empire. The rightness or otherwise of the 'rebellion' was therefore

not likely to affect my decision. Natal had a Volunteer Defence Force, and it was open to it to recruit more men. I read that this force had already been mobilised to quell the 'rebellion.'

I considered myself a citizen of Natal, being intimately connected with it. So I wrote to the Governor, expressing my readiness, if necessary, to form an Indian Ambulance Corps. He sent immediately an affirmative reply.

I had not expected such prompt acceptance of my offer. Fortunately I had made all the necessary arrangements even before writing the letter. If my offer was accepted I had decided to break up the Johannesburg home. Polak was to have a smaller house and my wife was to go and settle at Phœnix. I had her full co-operation in this decision. I do not remember her having ever stood in my way in matters like this. As soon, therefore, as I got the reply from the Governor, I gave the landlord the usual month's notice of vacating the house,

sent some of the things to Phœnix and left some with Polak.

I went to Durban and appealed for men. A big contingent was not necessary. We were a party of twenty four, of whom, besides me, four were Gujaratis. The rest were ex-indentured men from South India, excepting one who was a free Pathan.

In order to give me a status, and to facilitate work, as also in accordance with the existing convention, the Chief Medical Officer appointed me to the temporary rank of Sergeant Major and three men selected by me to the rank of sergeants and one to that of corporal. We also received our uniforms from the Government. Our Corps was on active service for nearly six weeks. On reaching the scene of the 'rebellion,' I saw that there was nothing there to justify the name of 'rebellion.' There was no resistance that one could see. The reason why the disturbance had been magnified into a rebellion was that a Zulu chief had

advised non-payment of a new tax imposed on his people, and had assegaied a sergeant who had gone to collect the tax. At any rate my heart was with the Zulus, and I was delighted, on reaching headquarters, to hear that our main work was to be the nursing of the wounded Zulus. The Medical Officer in charge welcomed us. He said the white people were not willing nurses for the wounded Zulus, that their wounds were festering, and that he was at his wits' end. He hailed our arrival as a godsend for those innocent people, and he equipped us with bandages, disinfectants, etc., and took us to the improvised hospital. The Zulus were delighted to see us. The white soldiers used to peep through the railings that separated us from them and tried to dissuade us from attending to the wounds. And as we would not heed them, they became enraged and poured unspeakable abuse on the Zulus.

Gradually I came into closer touch with these soldiers and they ceased

to interfere. Among the commanding officers were Col. Sparks and Col. Wylie who had bitterly opposed me in 1896. They were surprised at my attitude and they specially called and thanked me. They introduced me to General Mackenzie. Let not the reader think that these were professional soldiers. Col. Wylie was a well-known Durban lawyer. Col. Sparks was well-known as the owner of a butcher's shop in Durban. General Mackenzie was a noted Natal farmer. All these gentlemen were volunteers and as such they had received military training and experience.

The wounded in our charge were not wounded in battle. A section of them had been taken prisoners as suspects. The general had sentenced them to be flogged. The flogging had caused severe sores. These, being unattended to, were festering. The others were Zulu friendlies. Although these had badges given them to distinguish

them from the 'enemy' they had been shot at by the soldiers by mistake.

Besides this work I had to compound and dispense prescriptions for the white soldiers. This was easy enough for me as I had received a year's training in Dr. Booth's little hospital. This work brought me in close contact with many Europeans.

We were attached to a swift-moving column. It had orders to march wherever danger was reported. It was for the most part mounted infantry. As soon as our camp was moved, we had to follow on foot with our stretchers on our shoulders. Twice or thrice we had to march forty miles a day. But wherever we went, I am thankful that we had God's good work to do, having to carry to the camp on our stretchers those Zulu friendlies who had been inadvertently wounded, and to attend upon them as nurses.

CHAPTER XXV

HEART SEARCHINGS

THE Zulu 'rebellion' was full of new experiences and gave me much food for thought. The Boer War had not brought home to me the horrors of war with anything like the vividness that the 'rebellion' did. This was no war but a man hunt, not only in my opinion, but also in that of many Englishmen with whom I had occasion to talk. To hear every morning reports of the soldiers' rifles exploding like crackers in innocent hamlets, and to live in the midst of them was a trial. But I swallowed the bitter draught, especially as the work of my Corps consisted only in nursing the

wounded Zulus. I could see that but for us the Zulus would have been uncared for. This work, therefore, eased my conscience.

But there was much else to set one thinking. It was a sparsely populated part of the country. Few and far between in hills and dales were the scattered Kraals of the simple and so-called 'uncivilised' Zulus. Marching, with or without the wounded, through these solemn solitudes, I often fell into deep thought.

I pondered over *brahmacharya* and its implications, and my convictions took deeper root. I discussed it with my co-workers. I had not realised then how indispensable it was for self-realisation, but I clearly saw that one aspiring to serve humanity with his whole soul could not do without it. It was borne in upon me that I should have more and more occasions for service of the kind I was rendering, and that I should find myself unequal to my task if I were

engaged in the pleasures of family life and in the propagation and rearing of children.

In a word, I could not live both after the flesh and the spirit. On the present occasion, for instance, I should not have been able to throw myself into the fray, had my wife been expecting a baby. Without the observance of *brahmacharya* service of the family would be inconsistent with service of the community. With *brahmacharya* they would be perfectly consistent.

So thinking, I became somewhat impatient to take a final vow. The prospect of the vow brought a certain kind of exultation. Imagination also found free play and opened out limitless vistas of service.

Whilst I was thus in the midst of strenuous physical and mental work, a report came to the effect that the work of suppressing the 'rebellion' was nearly over, and that we should soon be discharged. A day or two after this our

discharge came and in a few days we got back to our homes.

After a short while I got a letter from the Governor specially thanking the Ambulance Corps for its services.

On my arrival at Phœnix I eagerly broached the subject of *brahmacharya* with Chhaganlal, Maganlal, West and others. They liked the idea and accepted the necessity of taking the vow, but they also represented the difficulties of the task. Some of them set themselves bravely to observe it, and some, I know, succeeded also.

I too took the plunge — the vow to observe *brahmacharya* for life. I must confess that I had not then fully realised the magnitude and immensity of the task I had undertaken. The difficulties are even today staring me in the face. The importance of the vow is being more and more borne in upon me. Life without *brahmacharya* appears to me to be insipid and animal-like. The brute by nature knows no self-restraint. Man is man

because he is capable of, and only in so far as he exercises, self-restraint. What formerly appeared to me to be extravagant praise of *brahmacharya* in our religious books seems now, with increasing clearness every day, to be absolutely proper and founded on experience.

I saw that *brahmacharya*, which is so full of wonderful potency, can by no means be an easy affair, and certainly not a mere matter of the body. It begins with bodily restraint, but it does not end there. The perfection of it precludes even an impure thought. A true *brahmachari* will not even dream of satisfying fleshly appetite, and until he is in that condition, he has a great deal of ground to cover.

For me the observance of even bodily *brahmacharya* has been full of difficulties. Today I may say that I feel myself fairly safe, but I have yet to achieve complete mastery over thought which is so essential. Not that the will or effort

is lacking, but it is yet a problem to me wherefrom undesirable thoughts spring their insidious invasions. I have no doubt that man possesses the key to lock out undesirable thoughts, but every one has to find it out for himself. Saints and seers have left their experiences for us, but they have given us no infallible and universal prescriptions. For perfection or freedom from error comes only from grace and so seekers after God have left us *mantras,* such as *Ramanama,* hallowed by their own austerities and charged with their purity. Without an unreserved surrender to His grace, complete mastery over thought is impossible. This is the teaching of every great book of religion, and I am realising the truth of it every moment of my striving after that perfect *brahmacharya.*

But part of the history of that striving and struggle will be told in chapters to follow. I shall conclude this chapter with an indication of how I set about the task. In the first flush of

enthusiasm, I found the observance quite easy. The very first change I made in my mode of life was to stop sharing the same bed with my wife or seeking privacy with her.

Thus *brahmacharya,* which I had been observing willy-nilly since 1900, was sealed with a vow in the middle of 1906.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BIRTH OF SATYAGRAHA

EVENTS were so shaping themselves in Johannesburg, as to make this self-purification on my part a preliminary as it were to Satyagraha. I can now see that all the principal events of my life, culminating in the vow of *brahmacharya,* were secretly preparing me for it.

The principle called Satyagraha came into being before that name was invented. Indeed when it was born, I myself could not say what it was. In Gujarati also we used the English phrase 'passive resistance' to describe it. When in a meeting of Europeans I found that

the term 'passive resistance' was too narrowly construed, that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it could be characterised by hatred and that it could finally manifest itself as violence, I had to demur to all these statements and explain the real nature of the Indian movement. It was clear that a new word must be coined by the Indians to designate their struggle.

But I could not for the life of me find out a new name, and therefore offered a nominal prize through *Indian Opinion* to the reader who made the best suggestion on the subject. As a result Maganlal Gandhi coined the word 'Sadagraha' (Sat = truth, Agraha = firmness) and won the prize. But in order to make it clearer I changed the word to 'Satyagraha' which has since become current in Gujarati as a designation for the struggle.

The history of this struggle is for all practical purposes a history of the remainder of my life in South Africa

and especially of my experiments with truth in that sub-continent. I wrote the major portion of this history in Yeravda jail and finished it after I was released. It was published in *Navajivan* and subsequently issued in book form. Sjt. Valji Govindji Desai has been translating it into English for *Current Thought,* but I am now arranging to have the English translation[1] published in book form at an early date, so that those who will may be able to familiarise themselves with my most important experiments in South Africa. I would recommend a perusal of my history of Satyagraha in South Africa to such readers as have not seen it already. I will not repeat what I have put down there but in the next few chapters will deal only with a few personal incidents of my life in South Africa which have not been covered by that history. And when I have done with these, I will at

1 The English translation has since been published by S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras.

once proceed to give the reader some idea of my experiments in India. Therefore, any one, who wishes to consider these experiments in their strict chronological order, will now do well to keep the history of Satyagraha in South Africa before him.

CHAPTER XXVII

MORE EXPERIMENTS IN DIETETICS

I was anxious to observe *brahmacharya* in thought, word and deed, and I was equally anxious to devote the maximum of time to the Satyagraha struggle and fit myself for it by cultivating purity. I was therefore led to make further changes and to impose greater restraints upon myself in the matter of food. The motive for the previous changes had been largely hygienic, but the new experiments were made from a religious standpoint.

Fasting and restriction in diet now played a more important part in my life. Passion in man is generally co-existent

with a hankering after the pleasures of the palate. And so it was with me. I have encountered many difficulties in trying to control passion as well as taste, and I cannot claim even now to have brought them under complete subjection. I have considered myself to be a heavy eater. What friends have thought to be my restraint has never appeared to me in that light. If I had failed to develop restraint to the extent that I have, I should have descended lower than the beasts and met my doom long ago. However, as I had adequately realised my shortcomings, I made great efforts to get rid of them, and thanks to this endeavour I have all these years pulled on with my body and put in with it my share of work.

Being conscious of my weakness and unexpectedly coming in contact with congenial company, I began to take an exclusive fruit diet or to fast on the *Ekadashi* day, and also to observe *Janmashtami* and similar holidays.

I began with a fruit diet, but from the standpoint of restraint I did not find much to choose between a fruit diet and a diet of food grains. I observed that the same indulgence of taste was possible with the former as with the latter, and even more, when one got accustomed to it. I therefore came to attach greater importance to fasting or having only one meal a day on holidays. And if there was some occasion for penance or the like, I gladly utilised it too for the purpose of fasting.

But I also saw, that the body now being drained more effectively, the food yielded greater relish and the appetite grew keener. It dawned upon me that fasting could be made as powerful a weapon of indulgence as of restraint. Many similar later experiences of mine as well as of others can be adduced as evidence of this startling fact. I wanted to improve and train my body, but as my chief object now was to achieve restraint and a conquest of the palate, I

selected first one food and then another, and at the same time restricted the amount. But the relish was after me, as it were. As I gave up one thing and took up another, this latter afforded me a fresher and greater relish than its predecessor.

In making these experiments I had several companions, the chief of whom was Hermann Kallenbach. I have already written about this friend in the history of Satyagraha in South Africa, and will not therefore go over the same ground here. Mr. Kallenbach was always with me whether in fasting or in dietetic changes. I lived with him at his own place when the Satyagraha struggle was at its height. We discussed our changes in food and derived more pleasure from the new diet than from the old. Talk of this nature sounded quite pleasant in those days, and did not strike me as at all improper. Experience has taught me, however, that it was wrong to have dwelt upon the relish of food. One should eat

not in order to please the palate but just to keep the body going. When each organ of sense subserves the body and through the body the soul, its special relish disappears, and then alone does it begin to function in the way nature intended it to do.

Any number of experiments is too small and no sacrifice is too great for attaining this symphony with nature. But unfortunately the current is now-a-days flowing strongly in the opposite direction. We are not ashamed to sacrifice a multitude of other lives in decorating the perishable body and trying to prolong its existence for a few fleeting moments, with the result that we kill ourselves, both body and soul. In trying to cure one old disease, we give rise to a hundred new ones; in trying to enjoy the pleasures of sense, we lose in the end even our capacity for enjoyment. All this is passing before our very eyes, but there are none so blind as those who will not see.

Having thus set forth their object and the train of ideas which led up to them, I now propose to describe the dietetic experiments at some length.

CHAPTER XXVIII

KASTURBAI'S COURAGE

THRICE in her life my wife narrowly escaped death through serious illness. The cures were due to household remedies. At the time of her first attack Satyagraha was going on or was about to commence. She had frequent haemorrhage. A medical friend advised a surgical operation, to which she agreed after some hesitation. She was extremely emaciated, and the doctor had to perform the operation without chloroform. It was successful, but she had to suffer much pain. She however went through it with wonderful bravery. The doctor and his wife who nursed her were all attention.

This was in Durban. The doctor gave me leave to go Johannesburg, and told me not to have any anxiety about the patient.

In a few days however I received a letter to the effect that Kasturbai was worse, too weak to sit up in bed, and had once become unconscious. The doctor knew that he might not, without my consent, give her wines or meat. So he telephoned to me at Johannesburg for permission to give her beef tea. I replied saying I could not grant the permission, but that if she was in a condition to express her wish in the matter she might be consulted, and she was free to do as she liked. 'But,' said the doctor, 'I refuse to consult the patient's wishes in the matter. You must come yourself. If you do not leave me free to prescribe whatever diet I like, I will not hold myself responsible for your wife's life.'

I took the train for Durban the same day, and met the doctor who quietly broke this news to me: 'I had already

given Mrs. Gandhi beef tea when I telephoned to you.'

'Now, doctor, I call this a fraud,' said I.

'No question of fraud in prescribing medicine or diet for a patient. In fact we doctors consider it a virtue to deceive patients or their relatives, if thereby we can save our patients,' said the doctor with determination.

I was deeply pained, but kept cool. The doctor was a good man and a personal friend. He and his wife had laid me under a debt of gratitude, but I was not prepared to put up with his medical morals.

'Doctor, tell me what you propose to do now. I would never allow my wife to be given meat or beef, even if it meant her death, unless of course she desired to take it.'

'You are welcome to your philosophy. I tell you that so long as you keep your wife under my treatment, I must have the option to give her anything I wish.

If you don't like this, I must regretfully ask you to remove her. I can't see her die under my roof.'

'Do you mean to say that I must remove her at once?'

'Whenever did I ask you to remove her? I only want to be left entirely free. If you do so, my wife and I will do all that is possible for her, and you may go back without the least anxiety on her score. But if you will not understand this simple thing, you will compel me to ask you to remove your wife from my place.'

I think one of my sons was with me. He entirely agreed with me, and said his mother should not be given beef tea. I next spoke to Kasturbai herself. She was really too weak to be consulted in this matter. But I thought it my painful duty to do so. I told her what had passed between the doctor and myself. She gave a resolute reply: 'I will not take beef tea. It is a rare thing in this world to be born as a human being,

and I would far rather die in your arms than pollute my body with such abominations.'

I pleaded with her. I told her that she was not bound to follow me. I cited to her the instances of Hindu friends and acquaintances who had no scruples about taking meat or wine as medicine. But she was adamant. 'No,' said she, 'pray remove me at once.'

I was delighted. Not without some agitation, I decided to take her away. I informed the doctor of her resolve. He exclaimed in a rage: 'What a callous man you are! You should have been ashamed to broach the matter to her in her present condition. I tell you your wife is not in a fit state to be removed. She cannot stand the least little hustling. I shouldn't be surprised if she were to die on the way. But if you must persist, you are free to do so. If you will not give her beef tea, I will not take the risk of keeping her under my roof even for a single day.'

So we decided to leave the place at once. It was drizzling and the station was some distance. We had to take the train from Durban for Phœnix, whence our Settlement was reached by a road of two miles and a half. I was undoubtedly taking a very great risk, but I trusted in God, and proceeded with my task. I sent a messenger to Phœnix in advance, with a message to West to receive us at the station with a hammock, a bottle of hot milk and one of hot water, and six men to carry Kasturbai in the hammock. I got a rickshaw to enable me to take her by the next a vailable train, put her into it in that dangerous condition, and marched away.

Kasturbai needed no cheering up. On the contrary, she comforted me, saying: 'Nothing will happen to me. Don't worry.'

She was mere skin and bone, having had no nourishment for days. The station platform was very large, and as the rickshaw could not be taken inside, one

had to walk some distance before one could reach the train. So I carried her in my arms and put her into the compartment. From Phœnix we carried her in the hammock, and there she slowly picked up strength under hydropathic treatment.

In two or three days of our arrival at Phœnix a Swami came to our place. He had heard of the resolute way in which we had rejected the doctor's advice, and he had, out of sympathy, come to plead with us. My second and third sons Manilal and Ramdas were, so far as I can recollect, present when the Swami came. He held forth on the religious harmlessness of taking meat, citing authorities from Manu. I did not like his carrying on this disputation in the presence of my wife, but I suffered him to do so out of courtesy. I knew the verses from the *Manusmriti*, I did not need them for my conviction. I knew also that there was a school which regarded these verses as interpolations,

but even if they were not, I held my views on vegetarianism independently of religious texts, and Kasturbai's faith was unshakeable. To her the scriptural texts were a sealed book, but the traditional religion of her forefathers was enough for her. The children swore by their father's creed and so they made light of the Swami's discourse. But Kasturbai put an end to the dialogue at once. 'Swamiji,' she said, 'whatever you may say, I do not want to recover by means of beef tea. Pray don't worry me any more. You may discuss the thing with my husband and children if you like. But my mind has been made up.'

CHAPTER XXIX

DOMESTIC SATYAGRAHA

MY first experience of jail life was in 1908. I saw that some of the regulations that the prisoners had to observe were such as should be voluntarily observed by a *brahmachari,* that is, one desiring to practise self-restraint. Such, for instance, was the regulation requiring the last meal to be finished before sunset. Neither the Indian nor the African prisoners were allowed tea or coffee. They could add salt to the cooked food if they wished, but they might not have anything for the mere satisfaction of the palate. When I asked the jail medical officer to give us curry powder, and to let us add

salt to the food whilst it was cooking, he said: 'You are not here for satisfying your palate. From the point of view of health, curry powder is not necessary, and it makes no difference whether you add salt during or after cooking.'

Ultimately these restrictions were modified, though not without much difficulty, but both were wholesome rules of self-restraint. Inhibitions imposed from without rarely succeed, but when they are self-imposed they have a decidedly salutary effect. So, immediately after release from jail, I imposed on myself the two rules. As far as was then possible I stopped taking tea, and finished my last meal before sunset. Both these now require no effort in the observance.

There came, however, an occasion which compelled me to give up salt altogether, and this restriction I continued for an unbroken period of ten years. I had read in some books on vegetarianism that salt was not a necessary article of diet for man, that on the contrary

saltless diet was better for the health. I had deduced that a *brahmachari* benefited by a saltless diet. I had read and realised that the weak-bodied should avoid pulses. I was very fond of them.

Now it happened that Kasturbai, who had a brief respite after her operation, had again begun getting haemorrhage and the malady seemed to be obstinate. Hydropathic treatment by itself did not answer. She had not much faith in my remedies though she did not resist them. She certainly did not ask for outside help. So when all my remedies had failed, I entreated her to give up salt and pulses. She would not agree, however much I pleaded with her, supporting myself with authorities. At last she challenged me, saying that even I could not give up these articles if I was advised to do so. I was pained and equally delighted,—delighted in that I got an opportunity to shower my love on her. I said to her: 'You are mistaken. If I was ailing and the doctor advised me to

give up these or any other articles, I should unhesitatingly do so. But there! Without any medical advice, I give up salt and pulses for one year, whether you do so or not.'

She was rudely shocked and exclaimed in deep sorrow: 'Pray forgive me. Knowing you, I should not have provoked you. I promise to abstain from these things, but for heaven's sake take back your vow. This is too hard on me.'

'It is very good for you to forego these articles. I have not the slightest doubt that you will be all the better without them. As for me, I cannot retract a vow seriously taken. And it is sure to benefit me, for all restraint, whatever prompts it, is wholesome for man. You will therefore leave me alone. It will be a test for me, and a moral support to you in carrying out your resolve.'

So she gave me up. 'You are too obstinate. You will listen to none,' she said, and sought relief in tears.

I would like to count this incident as an instance of Satyagraha, and as one of the sweetest recollections of my life.

After this Kasturbai began to pick up quickly — whether as a result of the saltless and pulseless diet or of the other consequent changes in her food, whether as a result of my strict vigilance in exacting observance of the other rules of life, or as an effect of the mental exhilaration produced by the incident, and if so to what extent, I cannot say. But she rallied quickly, haemorrhage completely stopped, and I added somewhat to my reputation as a quack.

As for me, I was all the better for the new denials. I never craved for the things I had left, the year sped away, and I found the senses to be more subdued than ever. The experiment stimulated the inclination for self-restraint, and I continued the abstention from the articles until long after I returned to India. Only once I happened to take both the articles whilst I was in London in 1914.

But of that occasion, and as to how I resumed both, I shall speak in a later chapter.

I have tried the experiment of a saltless and pulseless diet on many of my co-workers, and with good results in South Africa. Medically there may be two opinions as to the value of this diet, but morally I have no doubt that all self-denial is good for the soul. The diet of a man of self-restraint must be different from that of a man of pleasure, just as their ways of life must be different. Aspirants after *brahmachraya* often defeat their own end by adopting courses suited to a life of pleasure.

CHAPTER XXX

TOWARDS SELF-RESTRAINT

I have described in the last chapter how Kasturbai's illness was instrumental in bringing about some changes in my diet. At a later stage more changes were introduced for the sake of supporting *brahmacharya*.

The first of these was the giving up of milk. It was from Raychandbhai that I first learnt that milk stimulated animal passion. Books on vegetarianism strengthened the idea, but so long as I had not taken the *brahmacharya* vow I could not make up my mind to forego milk. I had long realised that milk was not necessary for supporting the body, but

it was not easy to give it up. While the necessity for avoiding milk in the interests of self-restraint was growing upon me, I happened to come across some literature from Calcutta describing the tortures to which cows and buffaloes were subjected by their keepers. This had a wonderful effect on me. I discussed it with Mr. Kallenbach.

Though I have introduced Mr. Kallenbach to the readers of the history of Satyagraha in South Africa, and referred to him in a previous chapter, I think it necessary to say something more about him here. We met quite by accident. He was a friend of Mr. Khan's, and as the latter had discovered deep down in him a vein of other-worldiness he introduced him to me.

When I came to know him I was startled at his love of luxury and extravagance. But at our very first meeting, he asked searching questions concerning matters of religion. We incidentally talked of Gautama Buddha's

renunciation. Our acquaintance soon ripened into very close friendship, so much so that we thought alike, and he was convinced that he must carry out in his life the changes I was making in mine.

At that time he was single, and was expending Rs. 1,200 monthly on himself, over and above house rent. Now he reduced himself to such simplicity that his expenses came to Rs. 120 per month. After the breaking up of my household and my first release from jail, we began to live together. It was a fairly hard life that we led.

It was during this time that we had the discussion about milk. Mr. Kallenbach said, 'We constantly talk about the harmful effects of milk. Why then do not we give it up? It is certainly not necessary.' I was agreeably surprised at the suggestion, which I warmly welcomed, and both of us pledged ourselves to abjure milk there and then. This was at Tolstoy Farm in the year 1912.

But this denial was not enough to satisfy me. Soon after this I decided to live on a purely fruit diet, and that too composed of the cheapest fruit possible. Our ambition was to live the life of the poorest people.

The fruit diet turned out to be very convenient also. Cooking was practically done away with. Raw groundnuts, bananas, dates, lemons, and olive oil composed our usual diet.

I must here utter a warning for the aspirants of *brahmacharya*. Though I have made out an intimate connection between diet and *brahmacharya*, it is certain that mind is the principal thing. A mind consciously unclean cannot be cleansed by fasting. Modifications in diet have no effect on it. The concupiscence of the mind cannot be rooted out except by intense self-examination, surrender to God, and lastly grace. But there is an intimate connection between the mind and the body, and the carnal mind always lusts for delicacies and

luxuries. To obviate this tendency dietetic restrictions and fasting would appear to be necessary. The carnal mind instead of controlling the senses becomes their slave, and therefore the body alwyas needs clean non-stimulating foods and periodical fasting.

Those who make light of dietetic restrictions and fasting are as much in error as those who stake their all on them. My experience teaches me that for those whose minds are working towards self-restraint dietetic restrictions and fasting are very helpful. In fact without their help concupiscence cannot be completely rooted out of the mind.

CHAPTER XXXI

FASTING

JUST about the time when I gave up milk and cereals, and started on the experiment of a fruit diet, I commenced fasting as a means of self-restraint. In this Mr. Kallenbach also joined me. I had been used to fasting now and again, but for purely health reasons. That fasting was necessary for self-restraint I learnt from a friend.

Having been born in a Vaishnava family and of a mother who was given to keeping all sorts of hard vows, I had observed, while in India, the *Ekadashi* and other fasts, but in doing so I had merely copied my mother and sought to please my parents.

At that time I did not understand, nor did I believe in, the efficacy of fasting. But seeing that the friend I have mentioned was observing it with benefit, and with the hope of supporting the *brahmacharya* vow, I followed his example and began keeping the *Ekadashi* fast. As a rule Hindus allow themselves milk and fruit on a fasting day, but such fast I had been keeping daily. So now I began complete fasting, allowing myself only water.

When I started on this experiment, the Hindu month of Shravan and the Islamic month of Ramzan happened to coincide. The Gandhis used to observe not only the Vaishnava but also the Shaivite vows, and visited the Vaishnava as also the Shaivite temples. Some of the members of the family used to observe *pradosha*[1] in the whole of the month of Shravan. I decided to do likewise.

These important experiments were undertaken while we were at Tolstoy

1 Fasting until evening.

Farm, where Mr. Kallenbach and I were staying with a few Satyagrahi families, including young people and children. For these last we had a school. Among them were four or five Musalmans. I always helped and encouraged them in keeping all their religious observances. I took care to see that they offered their daily *namaz*. There were Christians and Parsi youngsters too, whom I considered it my duty to encourage to follow their respective religious observances.

During this month, therefore, I persuaded the Musalman youngsters to observe the *ramzan* fast. I had of course decided to observe *pradosha* myself, but I now asked the Hindu, Parsi and Christian youngsters to join me. I explained to them that it was always a good thing to participate with others in any matter of self-denial. Many of the Farm inmates welcomed my proposal. The Hindu and the Parsi youngsters did not copy the Musalman ones in every detail; it was not necessary. The Musalman youngsters had

to wait for their breakfast until sunset, whereas the others did not do so, and were thus able to prepare delicacies for the Musalman friends and serve them. Nor had the Hindu and other youngsters to keep the Musalmans company when they had their last meal before sunrise next morning, and of course all except the Musalmans allowed themselves water.

The result of these experiments was that all were convinced of the value of fasting, and a splendid *esprit de corps* grew up among them.

We were all vegetarians on Tolstoy Farm, thanks, I must gratefully confess, to the readiness of all to respect my feelings. The Musalman youngsters must have missed their meat during *ramzan*, but none of them ever let me know that they did so. They delighted in and relished the vegetarian diet, and the Hindu youngsters often prepared vegetarian delicacies for them, in keeping with the simplicity of the Farm.

I have purposely digressed in the midst of this chapter on fasting, as I could not have given these pleasant reminiscences anywhere else, and I have indirectly described a characteristic of mine, namely that I have always loved to have my co-workers with me in anything that has appealed to me as being good. They were quite new to fasting, but thanks to the *pradosha* and *ramzan* fasts, it was easy for me to interest them in fasting as a means of self-restraint.

Thus an atmosphere of self-restraint naturally sprang up on the Farm. All the Farm inmates now began to join us in keeping partial and complete fasts, which I am sure was entirely to the good. I cannot definitely say how far this self-denial touched their hearts and helped them in their strivings to conquer the flesh. For my part, however, I am convinced that I greatly benefited by it both physically and morally. But I know that it does not necessarily follow

that fasting and similar other disciplines would have the same effect for all.

Fasting can help to curb animal passion, only if it is undertaken with a view to self-restraint. Some of my friends have actually found their animal passion and palate stimulated as an after-effect of fasts. That is to say, fasting is futile unless it is accompanied by an incessant longing for self-restraint. It is a mistake to think that mere physical fasting can by itself effect self-restraint. The famous verse from the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is worth noting in this connection:

> 'For a man who is fasting his senses
> Outwardly, the sense-objects disappear,
> Leaving the yearning behind; but when
> He has seen the Highest,
> Even the yearning disappears.'

Fasting and similar discipline is, therefore, one of the means to the end of self-restraint, but it is not all, and if physical fasting is not accompanied by mental fasting, it is bound to end in hypocrisy and consequent disaster.

CHAPTER XXXII

AS SCHOOLMASTER

THE reader will, I hope, bear in mind the fact, that I am, in these chapters, describing things not mentioned, or only cursorily mentioned, in the history of Satyagraha in South Africa. If he does so, he will easily be able to see the connection between the recent chapters.

As the Farm grew, it was found necessary to make some provision for the education of its boys and girls. There were, among these, Hindu, Musalman, Parsi and Christian boys and some Hindu girls. It was not possible, and I did not think it necessary, to engage special teachers for them. It was not possible,

for qualified Indian teachers were scarce, and even when available, none would be ready to go to a place 21 miles distant from Johannesburg on a small salary. Also we were certainly not overflowing with money. And I did not think it necessary to import teachers from outside the Farm. I did not believe in the existing system of education, and I had a mind to find out by experience and experiment the true system. Only this much I knew, that under ideal conditions, true education could be imparted only by the parents, and that then there should be the minimum of outside help, that Tolstoy Farm was a family, in which I occupied the place of the father, and that I should so far as possible shoulder the responsibility for the training of the young.

The conception no doubt was not without its flaws. All the young people had not been with me since their childhood, they had been brought up in different conditions and environments,

and they did not belong to the same religion. How could I do full justice to the young people, thus circumstanced, even if I assumed the place of paterfamilias?

But I had always given the first place to the culture of the heart or the building of character, and as I felt confident that moral training could be given to all alike, no matter how different their ages and their upbringing, I decided to live amongst them all the twenty four hours of the day as their father. I regarded character building as the proper foundation for their education, and if the foundation was firmly laid, I was sure that the children could learn all the other things themselves or with the assistance of friends.

But as I fully appreciated the necessity of a literary training in addition, I started some classes with the help of Messrs. Kallenbach and Pragji Desai. Nor did I underrate the building up of the body. This they got in the

course of their daily routine. For there were no servants on the Farm, and all the work, from cooking down to scavenging, was done by the inmates. There were many fruit trees to be looked after, and enough gardening to be done as well. Mr. Kallenbach was fond of gardening and had gained some experience of this work in one of the Governmental model gardens. It was obligatory on all, young and old, who were not engaged in the kitchen, to give some time to gardening. The children had the lion's share of this work, which included digging pits, felling timber and lifting loads. This gave them ample exercise. They took delight in the work, and so they did not generally need any other exercise or games. Of course some of them, and sometimes all of them, malingered and shirked. Sometimes I connived at their pranks, and often I was strict with them. I daresay they did not like the strictness but I do not recollect their having resisted it.

Whenever I was strict, I would, by argument, convince them that it was not right to play with one's work. The conviction would however be short-lived, the next moment they would again leave their work and go to play. All the same we got along, and at any rate they built up fine physiques. There was scarcely any illness on the Farm, though it must be said that good air and water and regular hours of food were not a little responsible for this.

A word about vocational training. It was my intention to teach every one of the youngsters some useful manual vocation. For this purpose Mr. Kallenbach went to a Trappist monastery and returned having learnt shoe-making. I learnt it from him and taught the art to such as were ready to take it up. Mr. Kallenbach had some experience of carpentry, and there was another inmate who knew it, so we had a small class in carpentry. Cooking almost all the youngsters knew.

All this was new for them. They had never even dreamt that they would have to learn these things some day. For generally the only training that Indian children received in South Africa was in the three R's.

On Tolstoy Farm we had made it a rule that the youngsters should not be asked to do what the teachers did not do, and therefore, when they were asked to do any work, there was always a teacher co-operating and actually working with them. Hence whatever the youngsters learnt, they learnt cheerfully.

Literary training and character building must be dealt with in the following chapters.

CHAPTER XXXIII

LITERARY TRAINING

IT was seen in the last chapter how we provided for the physical training on Tolstoy Farm, and incidentally for the vocational. Though this was hardly done in a way to satisfy me, it may be claimed to have been more or less successful.

Literary training, however, was a more difficult matter. I had neither the necessary resources, nor the literary equipment, besides which I had not the time I would have wished to devote to the subject. The physical work that I was doing used to leave me thoroughly exhausted at the end of the day, and I used to have the classes just when I was

most in need of some rest. Instead, therefore, of my being fresh for the class, I could with the greatest difficulty keep myself awake. The mornings had to be devoted to work on the farm and domestic duties, so the school hours had to be kept after the midday meal. There was no other time suitable for the school.

We gave three periods at the most to literary training. Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Urdu were all taught and tuition was given through the vernaculars of the boys. English was taught as well. It was also necessary to acquaint the Gujarati Hindu children with a little Sanskrit, and to teach all the children elementary history, geography and arithmetic.

I had undertaken to teach Tamil and Urdu. The little Tamil I knew was acquired during voyages and in jail. I had not got beyond Pope's excellent Tamil handbook. My knowledge of the Urdu script was all that I had acquired

on a single voyage, and my knowledge of the language was confined to the familiar Persian and Arabic words that I had learnt from contact with Musalman friends. Of Sanskrit I knew no more than I had learnt at the High School, even my Gujarati was no better than that which one acquires at the school.

Such was the capital with which I had to carry on. In poverty of literary equipment my colleagues went one better than I. But my love for the vernaculars of my country, my confidence in my capacity as a teacher, as also the ignorance of my pupils, and more than that, their generosity, stood me in good stead.

The Tamil boys were all born in South Africa, and therefore knew very little Tamil, and did not know the script at all. So I had to teach them the script and the rudiments of grammar. That was easy enough. My pupils knew that they could any day beat me in

Tamil conversation, and when Tamilians, not knowing English, came to see me, they became my interpreters. I got along merrily, because I never attempted to disguise my ignorance from my pupils. In all respects I showed myself to them exactly as I really was. Therefore in spite of my colossal ignorance of the language I never lost their love and respect. It was comparatively easier to teach the Musalman boys Urdu. They knew the script. I had simply to stimulate in them an interest in reading and to improve their handwriting.

These youngsters were for the most part unlettered and unschooled. But I found in the course of my work that I had very little to teach them, beyond weaning them from their laziness, and supervising their studies. As I was content with this, I could pull on with boys of different ages, and learning different subjects, in one and the same class room.

Of text-books, about which we hear so much, I never felt the want. I do not even remember having made much use of the books that were available. I did not find it at all necessary to load the boys with quantities of books. I have always felt that the true text-book for the pupil is his teacher. I remember very little that my teachers taught me from books, but I have even now a clear recollection of the things they taught me independently of books.

Children take in much more and with less labour through their ears than through their eyes. I do not remember having read any book from cover to cover with my boys. But I gave them, in my own language, all that I had digested from my reading of various books, and I daresay they are still carrying a recollection of it in their minds. It was laborious for them to remember what they learnt from books, but what I imparted to them by word of mouth they could repeat with the

greatest ease. Reading was a task for them, but listening to me was a pleasure, when I did not bore them by failing to make my subject interesting. And from the questions that my talks prompted them to make I had a measure of their power of understanding.

CHAPTER XXXIV

TRAINING OF THE SPIRIT

THE spiritual training of the boys was a much more difficult matter than their physical and mental training. I relied little on religious books for the training of the spirit. Of course I believed that every student should be acquainted with the elements of his own religion and have a general knowledge of his own scriptures, and therefore I provided for such knowledge as best I could. But that, to my mind, was part of the intellectual training. Long before I undertook the education of the youngsters of the Tolstoy Farm I had realised that the training of spirit was a

thing by itself. To develop the spirit is to build character and to enable one to work towards a knowledge of God and self-realisation. And I held that this was an essential part of the training of the young, and that all training without culture of the spirit was of no use, and might be even harmful.

I am familiar with the superstition that self-realisation is possible only in the fourth stage of life, *i. e.*, *sannyasa* (renunciation). But it is a matter of common knowledge, that those, who defer preparation for this invaluable experience until the last stage of life, attain not self-realisation but old age amounting to a second and pitiable childhood, living as a burden on this earth. I have a full recollection that I held these views even whilst I was teaching, *i. e.*, in 1911-12, though possibly I should not then have expressed them in identical language.

How then was this spiritual training to be given? I made the children

memorise and recite hymns, and I read to them from books on moral training. But that was far from satisfying me. As I came into closer contact with them I saw that it was not through books that one could impart training of the spirit. Just as physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise, and intellectual through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit. And the exercise of the spirit entirely depended on the life and character of the teacher. The teacher had always to be mindfull of his p's and q's, whether he was in the midst of his boys or not.

It is possible for a teacher situated miles away to affect the spirit of his pupils by his way of living. It would be idle for me, if I were a liar, to teach my boys to tell the truth. A cowardly teacher would never succeed in making his boys valiant, and a stranger to self-restraint could never teach his pupils the value of self-restraint. I saw therefore

that I must be an eternal object lesson for the boys and girls living with me. They thus became my teachers, and I learnt I must be good and live straight, if only for their sake. I may say that the increasing discipline and restraint I imposed on myself at Tolstoy Farm was mostly due to those wards of mine.

One of them was wild, unruly, given to lying, and quarrelsome. On one occasion he broke out most violently. I was exasperated. I never punished my boys, but this time I was very angry. I tried to reason with him. But he was adamant, and even tried to overreach me. At last I picked up a ruler lying at hand and delivered a blow on his arm. I trembled as I struck him, and I daresay he noticed it. This was an entirely novel experience for them all. The boy cried out and begged to be forgiven. He cried not because the beating was painful to him; he could, if he had been so minded, have paid me back in the same coin, being a stoutly built youth of seventeen, but he

realised my pain in being driven to this violent resource. Never again after this incident did he disobey me. But I still repent that violence. I am afraid I exhibited before him that day not the spirit, but the brute in me.

I have always been opposed to corporal punishment. I remember only one occasion on which I physically punished one of my sons. I have therefore never until this day been able to decide whether I was right or wrong in using the ruler. Probably it was improper, for it was prompted by anger and a desire to punish. Had it been an expression only of my distress I should have considered it justified. But the motive in this case was mixed.

This incident set me thinking and taught me a better method of correcting students. I do not know how that method would have availed on the occasion in question. The youngster soon forgot the incident and I do not think he ever showed great improvement.

But the incident made me understand better the duty of a teacher towards his pupils.

Cases of misconduct on the part of the boys often occurred after this, but I never resorted to corporal punishment. Thus in my endeavour to impart spiritual training to the boys and girls under me I came to understand better and better the power of the spirit.

CHAPTER XXXV

TARES AMONG THE WHEAT

IT was at Tolstoy Farm that Mr. Kallenbach drew my attention to a problem that had never before struck me. As I have already said, some of the boys at the Farm were bad and unruly. There were loafers, too, amongst them. With these my three boys came in daily contact, as also did other children of the same type as my own sons. This troubled Mr. Kallenbach, but his attention was centred on the impropriety of keeping *my* boys with these unruly youngsters.

One day he spoke out: 'Your way of mixing your own boys with the bad ones does not appeal to me. It can have only

one result. They will become demoralised through this bad company.'

I do not remember whether the question puzzled me at the moment, but I recollect what I said to him:

'How can I distinguish between my boys and the loafers? I am equally responsible for both. The youngsters have come because I invited them. If I were to dismiss them with some money, they would immediately run off to Johannesburg and fall back into their old ways. To tell you the truth, it is quite likely that they and their guardians believe, that by having come here, they have laid me under an obligation. That they have to put up with a good deal of inconvenience here, you and I know very well. But my duty is clear. I must have them here, and therefore my boys also must needs live with them. And surely you do not want me to teach my boys to feel from today that they are superior to other boys. To put that sense of superiority into their heads would be to

lead them astray. This association with other boys will be a good discipline for them, and they will, of their own accord, learn to discriminate between good and evil. Why should we not believe that if there is really anything good in them, it is bound to react on their companions? However that may be, I cannot help keeping them here, and if that means some risk, we must run it.'

Mr. Kallenbach shook his head.

The result, I think, cannot be said to have been bad. I do not consider my sons were any the worse for the experiment. In fact I can see that they gained something. If there was the slightest trace of superiority in them, it was destroyed and they learnt to mix with all kinds of children. They were tested and disciplined.

This and similar experiments have shown me that if good children are taught together with bad ones and thrown into their company, they will lose nothing, provided the experiment is

conducted under the watchful care of their parents and guardians.

It does not necessarily follow that children wrapped up in cottonwool are proof against all temptation or contamination. It is true, however, that when boys and girls of all kinds of upbringing are kept and taught together, the parents and the teachers are put to the severest test. They have constantly to be on the alert.

CHAPTER XXXVI

FASTING AS PENANCE

DAY by day it became increasingly clear to me, how very difficult it was to bring up and educate boys and girls in the right way. If I was to be their real teacher and guardian, I must touch their hearts, I must share their joys and sorrows, I must help them to solve the problems that faced them and I must take along the right channel the surging aspirations of their youth.

On the release of some of the Satyagrahis from jail, Tolstoy Farm was almost denuded of its inmates. The few that remained mostly belonged to Phœnix. So I removed them there.

Here I had to pass through a fiery ordeal.

In those days I had to move between Johannesburg and Phœnix. Once when I was in Johannesburg I received tidings of the moral fall of two of the inmates of the Ashram. News of an apparent failure or reverse in the Satyagraha struggle would not have shocked me, but this news came upon me like a thunderbolt. The same day I took the train for Phœnix. Mr. Kallenbach insisted on accompanying me. He had noticed the state I was in. He would not brook the thought of my going alone, for he happened to be the bearer of the tidings which had so upset me.

During the journey my duty seemed to become clear to me. I felt that the guardian or teacher was responsible, to some extent at least, for the lapse of his ward or pupil. So my responsibility regarding the incident in question became clear to me as daylight. My wife had already warned me in the matter, but

being of a trusting nature I had ignored her cautioning. I felt that the only way the guilty parties could be made to realise my distress, and the depth of their own fall, would be for me to do some penance. So I imposed upon myself a fast for seven days and a vow to have only one meal a day for a period of four months and a half. Mr. Kallenbach tried to dissuade me, but in vain. He finally conceded the propriety of the penance, and insisted on joining me. I could not resist his transparent affection.

I felt greatly relieved, for the decision meant a heavy load off my mind. The anger against the guilty parties subsided, and gave place to the purest pity for them. Thus considerably eased, I reached Phœnix. I made further investigation and acquainted myself with some more details I needed to know.

My penance pained everybody, but it cleared the atmosphere. Every one came to realise what a terrible thing it was to be sinful, and the bond that bound

me to the boys and girls became stronger and truer.

A circumstance arising out of this incident compelled me, a little while after, to go into a fast for fourteen days, the results of which exceeded even my expectations.

It is not my purpose to make out from these incidents that it is the duty of a teacher to resort to fasting whenever there is a delinquency on the part of his pupils. I hold, however, that some occasions do call for this drastic remedy. But it presupposes clearness of vision and spiritual fitness. Where there is no true love between the teacher and the pupil, where the pupil's delinquency has not touched the very being of the teacher and where the pupil has no respect for the teacher, fasting is out of place and may even be harmful. Though there is thus room for doubting the propriety of fasts in such cases, there is no question about the teacher's responsibility for the errors of his pupil.

The first penance did not prove difficult for any of us. I had to suspend or stop none of my normal activities. And it may be recalled that during the whole of this period of penance I was a strict fruitarian. The latter part of the second fast went fairly hard with me. I had not then completely understood the wonderful efficacy of *Ramanama*, and my capacity for suffering was to that extent less. Besides, I did not know the technique of fasting, especially the necessity of drinking plenty of water, however nauseating or distasteful it might be. And then the fact that the first fast had been an easy affair had made me rather careless as to the second. Thus during the first I took Kuhne baths every day, but during the second, I gave them up after two or three days, and also drank very little water, as it was distasteful and produced nausea. The throat became parched and weak and during the last days I could speak only in a very low voice. In spite of this,

however, my work was carried on through dictation where writing was necessary. I regularly listened to readings from the Ramayan and other sacred books. I had also sufficient strength to discuss and advise in all urgent matters.

CHAPTER XXXVII

TO MEET GOKHALE

I must skip many of the recollections of South Africa.

At the conclusion of the Satyagraha struggle in 1914, I received Gokhale's instructions to return home via London. So in July Kasturbai, Kallenbach and I sailed for England.

During Satyagraha I had begun travelling third class. I therefore took third class passages for this voyage. But there was a good deal of difference between third class accommodation on the boat on this route and that provided on Indian coastal boats or railway trains. There is hardly sufficient sitting, much

less sleeping, accommodation in the Indian service, and little cleanliness. During the voyage to London, on the other hand, there was enough room, and equal cleanliness, and the steamship company had provided special facilities for us. The company had provided reserved closet accommodation for us, and as we were fruitarians, the steward had orders to supply us with fruits and nuts. As a rule third class passengers get little fruit or nuts. These facilities made our eighteen days on the boat quite comfortable.

Some of the incidents during the voyage are well worth recording. Mr. Kallenbach was very fond of binoculars, and had one or two costly pairs. We had daily discussions over one of these. I tried to impress on him that this possession was not in keeping with the ideal of simplicity that we aspired to reach. Our discussions came to a head one day, as we were standing near the porthole of our cabin.

'Rather than allow these to be a bone of contention between us, why not throw them into the sea, and be done with them?' said I.

'Certainly throw the wretched things away,' said Kallenbach.

'I mean it,' said I.

'So do I,' quickly came the reply.

And forthwith I flung them into the sea. They were worth some £7, but their value lay less in their price than in Mr. Kallenbach's infatuation for them. But having got rid of them he never regretted it.

This is but one out of the many incidents that happened between Mr. Kallenbach and me.

Every day we had to learn something new in this way, for both of us were trying to tread the path of Truth. In the march towards Truth, anger, selfishness, hatred, etc., naturally give way, for otherwise Truth would be impossible to attain. A man who is swayed by passions may have good

enough intentions, may be truthful in word, but he will never find the Truth. A successful search for Truth means complete deliverance from the dual throng such as of love and hate, happiness and misery.

Not much time had elapsed since my fast when we started on our voyage. I had not regained my normal strength. I used to stroll on deck to get a little exercise, so as to revive my appetite and digest what I ate. But even this exercise was beyond me, causing pain in the calves, so much so that on reaching London I found that I was worse rather than better. There I came to know Dr. Jivraj Mehta. I gave him the history of my fast and subsequent pain, and he said, 'If you do not take complete rest for a few days, there is a fear of your legs going out of use.'

It was then that I learnt that a man emerging from a long fast should not be in a hurry to regain lost strength, and should also put a curb on his appetite.

More caution and perhaps more restraint are necessary in breaking a fast than in keeping it.

In Madeira we heard that the great War might break out at any moment. As we entered the English Channel we received the news of its actual outbreak, and we were stopped for some time. It was a difficult business to tow the boat through the submarine mines which had been laid throughout the Channel, and it took about two days to reach Southampton.

War was declared on the 4th of August. We reached London on the 6th.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MY PART IN THE WAR

ON arrival in England I learnt that Gokhale had been stranded in Paris where he had gone for reasons of health, and as communication between Paris and London had been cut off, there was no knowing when he would return. I did not want to go home without having seen him, but no one could say definitely when he would arrive.

What then was I to do in the meanwhile? What was my duty as regards the War? Sorabji Adajania, my comrade in jail and a Satyagrahi, was then reading for the bar in London. As one of the best Satyagrahis he had been sent

to England to qualify himself as a barrister, so that he might take my place on return to South Africa. Dr. Pranjivandas Mehta was finding his expenses. With him, and through him, I had conferences with Dr. Jivraj Mehta and others who were prosecuting their studies in England. In consultation with them, a meeting of the Indian residents in Great Britain and Ireland was called. I placed my views before them.

I felt that Indians residing in England ought to do their bit in the War. English students had volunteered to serve in the army, and Indians might do no less. A number of objections were taken to this line of argument. There was, it was contended, a world of difference between the Indians and the English. We were slaves and they were masters. How could a slave cooperate with the master in the hour of the latter's need? Was it not the duty of the slave, seeking to be free, to make the master's

need his opportunity? This argument failed to appeal to me then. I knew the difference of status between an Indian and an Englishman, but I did not believe that we had been quite reduced to slavery. I felt then that it was more the fault of individual British officials than of the British system, and that we could convert them by love. If we would improve our status through the help and cooperation of the British, it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their hour of need. Though the system was faulty, it did not seem to me to be intolerable, as it does today. But if having lost my faith in the system, I refuse to cooperate with the British Government today, how could those friends then do so, having lost their faith not only in the system but in the officials as well?

The opposing friends felt that that was the hour for making a bold declaration of the Indian demands and for improving the Indians' status.

I thought that England's need should not be turned into our opportunity, and that it was more becoming and farsighted not to press our demands while the War lasted. I therefore adhered to my advice and invited those who would to enlist as volunteers. There was a good response, practically all the provinces and all the religions being represented among the volunteers.

I wrote a letter to Lord Crewe, acquainting him with these facts, and expressing our readiness to be trained for ambulance work, if that should be considered as a condition precedent to the acceptance of our offer.

Lord Crewe accepted the offer after some hesitation, and thanked us for having tendered our services to the Empire at that critical hour.

The volunteers began their preliminary training in first aid to the wounded under the well-known Dr. Cantlie. It was a short course of six weeks, but it covered the whole course of first aid.

We were a class of about 80. In six weeks we were examined, and all except one passed. For these the Government now provided military drill and other training. Colonel Baker was placed in charge of this work.

London in these days was a sight worth seeing. There was no panic, but all were busy helping to the best of their ability. Able-bodied adults began training as combatants, but what were the old, the infirm and the women to do? There was enough work for them, if they wanted. So they employed themselves in cutting and making clothes and dressings for the wounded.

The Lyceum, a ladies' club, undertook to make as many clothes for the soldiers as they could. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu was a member of this club, and she threw herself whole-heartedly into the work. This was my first acquaintance with her. She placed before me a heap of clothes which had been cut to pattern, and asked me to get them all sewn up

and return them to her. I welcomed her demand and with the assistance of friends got as many clothes made as I could manage during my training for first aid.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A SPIRITUAL DILEMMA

AS soon as the news reached South Africa that I along with other Indians had offered my services in the War, I received two cables. One of these was from Mr. Polak who questioned the consistency of my action with my profession of *ahimsa*.

I had to a certain extent anticipated this objection, for I had discussed the question in my *Hind Swaraj* ('Indian Home Rule'), and used to discuss it day in and day out with friends in South Africa. All of us recognised the immorality of war. If I was not prepared to prosecute my assailant, much less

should I be willing to participate in a war, especially when I knew nothing of the justice or otherwise of the cause of the combatants. Friends of course knew that I had previously served in the Boer War, but they assumed that my views had since undergone a change.

As a matter of fact the very same line of argument that persuaded me to take part in the Boer War had weighed with me on this occasion. It was quite clear to me that participation in war could never be consistent with *ahimsa*. But it is not always given to one to be equally clear about one's duty. A votary of truth is often obliged to grope in the dark.

Ahimsa is a comprehensive principle. We are helpless mortals caught in the conflagration of *himsa*. The saying that life lives on life has a deep meaning in it. Man cannot for a moment live without consciously or unconsciously committing outward *himsa*. The very fact of his living, — eating, drinking and moving

about, — necessarily involves some *himsa*, destruction of life, be it ever so minute. A votary of *ahimsa* therefore remains true to his faith if the spring of all his actions is compassion, if he shuns to the best of his ability the destruction of the tiniest creature, tries to save it, and thus incessantly strives to be free from the deadly coil of *himsa*. He will be constantly growing in self-restraint and compassion, but he can never become entirely free from outward *himsa*.

Then again, because, underlying *ahimsa* is the unity of all life, the error of one cannot but affect all, and hence man cannot be wholly free from *himsa*. So long as he continues to be a social being, he cannot but participate in the *himsa* that the very existence of society involves. When two nations are fighting, the duty of a votary of *ahimsa* is to stop the war. He who is not equal to that duty, he who has no power of resisting war, he who is not qualified to resist war, may take part in war, and yet whole-heartedly

try to free himself, his nation, and the world from war.

I had hoped to improve my status and that of my people through the British Empire. Whilst in England I was enjoying the protection of the British Fleet, and taking as I did shelter under its armed might, I was directly participating in its potential violence. Therefore, if I desired to retain my connection with the Empire and to live under its banner, one of three courses was open to me: I could declare open resistance to the war, and in accordance with the law of Satyagraha, boycott the Empire until it changed its military policy, or I could seek imprisonment by civil disobedience of such of its laws as were fit to be disobeyed, or I could participate in the war on the side of the Empire and thereby acquire the capacity and fitness for resisting the violence of war. I lacked this capacity and fitness, so I thought there was nothing for it but for me to serve in the War.

I make no distinction, from the point of view of *ahimsa* between combatants and non-combatants. He who volunteers to serve a band of dacoits, by working as their carrier, or their watchman while they are about their business, or their nurse when they are wounded, is as much guilty of dacoity as the dacoits themselves. In the same way those who confine themselves to attending to the wounded in battle cannot be absolved from the guilt of war.

I had argued the whole thing out to myself in this manner, before I received Polak's cable, and soon after its receipt, I discussed these views with several friends and concluded that it was my duty to offer to serve in the War. Even today I see no flaw in that line of argument, nor am I sorry for my action, holding as I then did views favourable to the British connection.

I know that even then I could not carry conviction with all my friends about the correctness of my position.

The question is a subtle one. It admits of differences of opinion, and therefore I have submitted my argument as clearly as possible to those who believe in *ahimsa* and who are making serious efforts to practise it in every walk of life. A devotee of Truth may not do anything in deference to convention. He must always hold himself open to correction, and whenever he discovers himself to be wrong he must confess it at all cost and atone for it.

CHAPTER XL

MINIATURE SATYAGRAHA

THOUGH I thus took part in the War as a matter of duty, as chance would have it, I was not only unable directly to participate in it, but was actually compelled to offer what may be called miniature Satyagraha even at that critical juncture.

I have already said that an officer was appointed in charge of our training, as soon as our names were approved and enlisted. We were all under the impression that this Commanding Officer was to be our chief only so far as technical matters were concerned, and that in all other matters I was the head

of our Corps, which was directly responsible to me in matters of internal discipline; that is to say, the Commanding Officer had to deal with the Corps through me. But from the first the officer left us under no such delusion.

Mr. Sorabji Adajania was a shrewd man. He warned me. 'Beware of this man,' he said. 'He seems inclined to lord it over us. We will have none of his orders. We are prepared to look upon him as our instructor. But the youngsters he has appointed to instruct us also feel as though they had come as our masters.'

These youngsters were Oxford students who had come to instruct us and whom the Commanding Officer had appointed to be our section leaders.

I also had not failed to notice the high-handedness of the Commanding Officer, but I asked Sorabji not to be anxious and tried to pacify him. But he was not the man to be easily convinced.

'You are too trusting. These people will deceive you with wretched words, and when at last you see through them, you will ask us to resort to Satyagraha, and so come to grief, and bring us all to grief along with you,' said he with a smile.

'What else but grief can you hope to come to by having cast in your lot with me?' said I. 'A Satyagrahi is born to be deceived. Let the Commanding Officer deceive us. Have I not told you times without number that ultimately a deceiver only deceives himself?'

Sorabji gave a loud laugh. 'Well, then,' said he, 'continue to be deceived. You will some day meet your death in Satyagraha and drag poor mortals like me behind you.'

These words put me in mind of what the late Miss Emily Hobhouse wrote to me with regard to non-cooperation: 'I should not be surprised if one of these days you have to go to the gallows for the sake of truth. May God

show you the right path and protect you.'

The talk with Sorabji took place just after the appointment of the Commanding Officer. In a very few days our relations with him reached the breaking point. I had hardly regained my strength after the fourteen days' fast, when I began to take part in the drill, often walking to the appointed place about two miles from home. This gave me pleurisy and laid me low. In this condition I had to go week-end camping. Whilst the others stayed there, I returned home. It was here that an occasion arose for Satyagraha.

The Commanding Officer began to exercise his authority somewhat freely. He gave us clearly to understand that he was our head in all matters, military and non-military, giving us at the same time a taste of his authority. Sorabji hurried to me. He was not at all prepared to put up with this high-handedness. He said: 'We must have all orders through you. We are still in the training camp

and all sorts of absurd orders are being issued. Invidious distinctions are made between ourselves and those youths who have been appointed to instruct us. We must have it out with the Commanding Officer, otherwise we shall not be able to go on any longer. The Indian students and others who have joined our Corps are not going to abide by any absurd orders. In a cause which has been taken up for the sake of self-respect, it is unthinkable to put up with loss of it.'

I approached the Commanding Officer and drew his attention to the complaints I had received. He wrote asking me to set out the complaints in writing, at the same time asking me 'to impress upon those who complain that the proper direction in which to make complaints is to me through their section commanders, now appointed, who will inform me through the instructors.'

To this I replied saying that I claimed no authority, that in the military sense I was no more than any other

private, but that I had believed that as Chairman of the Volunteer Corps, I would be allowed unofficially to act as their representative. I also set out the grievances and requests that had been brought to my notice, namely, that grievous dissatisfaction had been caused by the appointment of section leaders without reference to the feeling of the members of the Corps; that they be recalled, and the Corps be invited to elect section leaders, subject to the Commander's approval.

This did not appeal to the Commanding Officer who said it was repugnant to all military discipline that the section leaders should be elected by the Corps, and that the recall of appointments already made would be subversive of all discipline.

So we held a meeting and decided upon withdrawal. I brought home to the members the serious consequences of Satyagraha. But a very large majority voted for the resolution which was to the

effect, that unless the appointments of Corporals already made were recalled, and the members of the Corps given an opportunity of electing their own Corporals, the members would be obliged to abstain from further drilling and week-end camping.

I then addressed a letter to the Commanding Officer telling him what a severe disappointment to me his letter rejecting my suggestion had been. I assured him that I was not fond of any exercise of authority and that I was most anxious to serve. I also drew his attention to a precedent. I pointed out that although I occupied no official rank in the South African Indian Ambulance Corps, at the time of the Boer War, there was never a hitch between Colonel Gallwey and the Corps, and the Colonel never took a step without reference to me with a view to ascertain the wishes of the Corps. I also enclosed a copy of the resolution we had passed the previous evening.

This had no good effect on the Officer who felt that the meeting and the resolution were a grave breach of discipline.

Hereupon I addressed a letter to the Secretary of State for India acquainting him with all the facts and enclosing a copy of the resolution. He replied explaining that conditions in South Africa were different, and drawing my attention to the fact that under the rules the section commanders were appointed by the Commanding Officer, but assuring me that in future when appointing section commanders, the Commanding Officer would consider my recommendations.

A good deal of correspondence passed between us after this, but I do not want to prolong the bitter tale. Suffice it to say that my experience was of a piece with the experiences we daily have in India. What with threats and what with adroitness the Commanding Officer succeeded in creating a division in our Corps. Some of those who had voted for

the resolution yielded to the Commander's threats or persuasions and went back on their promise.

About this time an unexpectedly large contingent of wounded soldiers arrived at the Netley Hospital and the services of our Corps were requisitioned. Those whom the Commanding Officer could persuade went to Netley. The others refused to go. I was on my back, but was in communication with the members of the Corps. Mr. Roberts, the Under-Secretary of State, honoured me with many calls during those days. He insisted on my persuading the others to serve. He suggested that they should form a separate Corps, and that at the Netley Hospital they could be responsible only to the Commanding Officer there, so that there would be no question of loss of self-respect, Government would be placated, and at the same time helpful service would be rendered to the large number of wounded received at the hospital. This suggestion appealed both

to my companions and to me, with the result that those who had stayed away also went to Netley.

Only I remained away, lying on my back and making the best of a bad job.

CHAPTER XLI

GOKHALE'S CHARITY

I have already referred to the attack of pleurisy I had in England. Gokhale returned to London soon after. Kallenbach and I used regularly to go to him. Our talks were mostly about the War, and as Kallenbach had the geography of Germany at his finger tips, and had travelled much in Europe, he used to show him on the map the various places in connection with the War.

When I got pleurisy this also became a topic of daily discussion. My dietetic experiments were going on even then. My diet consisted, among other things, of groundnuts, ripe and unripe bananas,

lemon, olive oil, tomatoes and grapes. I completely eschewed milk, cereals, pulses and other things.

Dr. Jivraj Mehta treated me. He pressed me hard to resume milk and cereals, but I was obdurate. The matter reached Gokhale's ears. He had not much regard for my reasoning in favour of a fruitarian diet, and he wanted me to take whatever the doctor prescribed for my health.

It was no easy thing for me not to yield to Gokhale's pressure. When he would not take a refusal, I begged him to give me twenty four hours for thinking over the question. As Kallenbach and I returned home that evening, we discussed where my duty lay. He had been with me in my experiment. He liked it, but I saw that he was agreeable to my giving it up if my health demanded it. So I had to decide for myself according to the dictates of the inner voice.

I spent the whole night thinking over the matter. To give up the experiment

would mean renouncing all my ideas in that direction, and yet I found no flaw in them. The question was how far I should yield to Gokhale's loving pressure, and how far I might modify my experiment in the so-called interests of health. I finally decided to adhere to the experiment in so far as the motive behind was chiefly religious, and to yield to the doctor's advice where the motive was mixed. Religious considerations had been predominant in the giving up of milk. I had before me a picture of the wicked processes the *govals* in Calcutta adopted to extract the last drop of milk from their cows and buffaloes. I also had the feeling that just as meat was not man's food, even so animal's milk could not be man's food. So I got up in the morning with the determination to adhere to my resolve to abstain from milk. This greatly relieved me. I dreaded to approach Gokhale, but I trusted him to respect my decision.

In the evening Kallenbach and I called on Gokhale at the National Liberal Club. The first question he asked me was: 'Well, have you decided to accept the doctor's advice?'

I gently but firmly replied: 'I am willing to yield on all points except one about which I beg you not to press me. I will not take milk, milk-products or meat. If not to take these things should mean my death, I feel I had better face it.'

'Is this your final decision?' asked Gokhale.

'I am afraid I cannot decide otherwise,' said I. 'I know that my decision will pain you, but I beg your forgiveness.'

With a certain amount of pain but with deep affection, Gokhale said: 'I do not approve of your decision. I do not see any religion in it. But I won't press you any more.' With these words he turned to Dr. Jivraj Mehta and said: 'Please don't worry him any more.

Prescribe anything you like within the limit he has set for himself.'

The doctor expressed dissent but was helpless. He advised me to take *mung* soup, with a dash of asafoetida in it. To this I agreed. I took it for a day or two, but it increased my pain. As I did not find it suitable, I went back to fruits and nuts. The doctor of course went on with his external treatment. The latter somewhat relieved my pain, but my restrictions were to him a sore handicap.

Meanwhile Gokhale left for home, as he could not stand the October fogs of London.

CHAPTER XLII

TREATMENT OF PLEURISY

THE persistence of the pleurisy caused some anxiety, but I knew that the cure lay not in taking medicine internally but in dietetic changes assisted by external remedies.

I called in Dr. Allinson, of vegetarian fame, who treated diseases by dietetic modifications and whom I had met in 1890. He thoroughly overhauled me. I explained to him how I had pledged myself not to take milk. He cheered me up and said: 'You need not take milk. In fact I want you to do without any fat for some days.' He then advised me to live on plain brown bread, raw vegetables

such as beet, radish, onion and other tubers and greens, and also fresh fruit, mainly oranges. The vegetables were not to be cooked but merely grated fine, if I could not masticate them.

I adopted this for about three days, but raw vegetables did not quite suit me. My body was not in a condition to enable me to do full justice to the experiment. I was nervous about taking raw vegetables.

Dr. Allinson also advised me to keep all the windows of my room open for the whole twenty four hours, bathe in tepid water, have an oil massage on the affected parts and a walk in the open for fifteen to thirty minutes. I liked all these suggestions.

My room had French windows which if kept wide open would let in the rain. The fanlight could not be opened. I therefore got the glass broken, so as to let in fresh air and I partially opened the windows in a manner not to let in rain.

All these measures somewhat improved my health, but did not completely cure me.

Lady Cecilia Roberts occasionally called on me. We became friends. She wanted very much to persuade me to take milk. But as I was unyielding, she hunted about for a substitute for milk. Some friend suggested to her malted milk, assuring her quite unknowingly that it was absolutely free from milk, and that it was a chemical preparation with all the properties of milk. Lady Cecilia, I knew, had a great regard for my religious scruples, and so I implicitly trusted her. I dissolved the powder in water and took it only to find that it tasted just like milk. I read the label on the bottle, to find only too late, that it was a preparation of milk. So I gave it up.

I informed Lady Cecilia about the discovery, asking her not to worry over it. She came post haste to me to say how sorry she was. Her friend had not

read the label at all. I begged her not to be anxious and expressed my regret that I could not avail myself of the things she had procured with so much trouble. I also assured her that I did not at all feel upset or guilty over having taken milk under a misapprehension.

I must skip over many other sweet reminiscences of my contact with Lady Cecilia. I could think of many friends who have been a source of great comfort to me in the midst of trials and disappointments. One who has faith reads in them the merciful providence of God who thus sweetens sorrow itself.

Dr. Allinson, when he next called, relaxed his restrictions and permitted me to have groundnut butter or olive oil for the sake of fat, and to take the vegetables, cooked if I chose, with rice. These changes were quite welcome, but they were far from giving me a complete cure. Very careful nursing was still

necessary and I was obliged to keep mostly in bed.

Dr. Mehta occasionally looked in to examine me, and held out a standing offer to cure me if only I would listen to his advice.

Whilst things were going on in this way Mr. Roberts one day came to see me and urged me very strongly to go home. 'You cannot possibly go to Netly in this condition. There is still severer cold ahead of us. I would strongly advise you to get back to India for it is only there that you can be completely cured. If, after your recovery, you should find the War still going on, you will have many opportunities there of rendering help. As it is, I do not regard what you have already done as by any means a mean contribution.'

I accepted his advice and began to make preparations for returning to India.

CHAPTER XLIII

HOMEWARD

MR. Kallenbach had accompanied me to England, with a view to going to India. We were staying together, and of course wanted to sail by the same boat. Germans however were under such strict surveillance that we had our doubts about Mr. Kallenbach getting a passport. I did my best to get it and Mr. Roberts, who was in favour of his getting his passport, sent a cable to the Viceroy in this behalf. But straight came Lord Hardinge's reply: 'Regret Government of India not prepared to take any such risk.' All of us understood the force of the reply.

It was a great wrench for me to part from Mr. Kallenbach, but I could see that his pang was greater. Could he have come to India, he would have been leading today the simple happy life of a farmer and weaver. Now he is in South Africa leading his old life and doing brisk business as an architect.

We wanted a third class passage, but as there was none available on P. and O. boats, we had to go second.

We took with us the dried fruit we had carried from South Africa, as most of it would not be procurable on the boat where fresh fruit was easily available.

Dr. Jivraj Mehta had bandaged my ribs with 'Mede's Plaster' and had asked me not to remove it till we reached the Red Sea. For two days I put up with the discomfort, but finally it became too much for me. It was with considerable difficulty that I managed to undo the plaster and regain the liberty of having a proper wash and bath.

My diet consisted mostly of nuts and fruits. I found that I was improving every day and felt very much better by the time we entered the Suez Canal. I was weak, but felt entirely out of danger, and I gradually went on increasing my exercise. The improvement I attributed largely to the pure air of the temperate zone.

Whether it was due to past experience or to any other reason, I do not know, but the kind of distance I noticed between the English and Indian passengers on the boat was something I had not observed even on my voyage from South Africa. I did talk to a few Englishmen, but the talk was mostly formal. There were hardly any cordial conversations such as had certainly taken place on the South African boats. The reason for this was, I think, to be found in the conscious or unconscious feeling at the back of the Englishman's mind that he belonged to the ruling race, and the feeling at the back of

the Indian's mind that he belonged to the subject race.

I was eager to reach home and get free from this atmosphere.

On arriving at Aden we already began to feel somewhat at home. We knew the Adenwallas very well, having met Mr. Kekobad Kavasji Dinshaw in Durban and come in close contact with him and his wife.

A few days more and we reached Bombay. It was such a joy to get back to the homeland after an exile of ten years.

Gokhale had inspired a reception for me in Bombay, where he had come in spite of his delicate health. I had approached India in the ardent hope of merging myself in him, and thereby feeling free. But fate had willed it otherwise.

CHAPTER XLIV

SOME REMINISCENCES OF THE BAR

BEFORE coming to a narrative of the course my life took in India, it seems necessary to recall a few of the South African experiences which I had deliberately left out.

Some lawyer friends have asked me to give my reminiscences of the bar. The number of these is so large, that if I were to describe them all they would occupy a volume by themselves, and would take me out of my scope. But it may not perhaps be improper to recall some of those which bear upon the practice of truth.

So far as I can recollect, I have already said that I never resorted to

untruth in my profession, and that a large part of my legal practice was in the interest of public work, for which I charged nothing beyond out-of-pocket expenses, and those too I sometimes met myself. I had thought that in saying this I had said all that was necessary as regards my legal practice. But friends want me to do more. They seem to think that if I were to describe, however slightly, some of the occasions when I refused to swerve from the truth, the legal profession might profit by it.

As a student I had heard that the lawyer's profession was a liar's profession. But this did not influence me, as I had no intention of earning either position or money by lying.

My principle was put to the test many a time in South Africa. Often I would know that my opponents had tutored their witnesses, and if I only encouraged my client or his witnesses to lie, we would win the case. But I always resisted the temptation. I remember only one

occasion when, after having won a case, I suspected that my client had deceived me. In my heart of hearts I always wished that I should win only if my client's case was right. In fixing my fees I do not recall ever having made them conditional on my winning the case. Whether my client won or lost I expected nothing more nor less than my fees.

I warned every new client at the outset that he should not expect me to take up a false case or to coach the witnesses, with the result that I built up such a reputation that no false cases used to come to me. Indeed some of my clients would keep their clean cases for me, and take the doubtful ones elsewhere.

There was one case which proved a severe trial. It was brought to me by one of my best clients. It was a case of highly complicated accounts and had been a prolonged one. It had been heard in parts before several courts. Ultimately the book-keeping portion of

it was entrusted by the court to the arbitration of some qualified accountants. The award was entirely in favour of my client, but the arbitrators had inadvertently committed an error in calculation which, however small, was serious, inasmuch as an entry which ought to have been on the debit side was made on the credit side. The opponents had opposed the award on other grounds. I was junior counsel for my client. When the senior counsel became aware of the error, he was of opinion that our client was not bound to admit it. He was clearly of opinion that no counsel was bound to admit anything that went against his client's interest. I said we ought to admit the error.

But the senior counsel contended: 'In that case there is every likelihood of the court cancelling the whole award, and no sane counsel would imperil his client's case to that extent. At any rate I would be the last man to take any such risk. If the case were to be sent up for

a fresh hearing, one could never tell what expenses our client might have to incur, and what the ultimate result might be!'

The client was present when this conversation took place.

I said: 'I feel that both our client and we ought to run the risk. Where is the certainty of the court upholding a wrong award, simply because we do not admit the error? And supposing the admission were to bring the client to grief, what harm is there?'

'But why should we make the admission at all?' said the senior counsel.

'Where is the surety of the court not detecting the error or our opponent not discovering it?' said I.

'Well then, will you argue the case? I am not prepared to argue it on your terms,' replied the senior counsel with decision.

I humbly answered: 'If you will not argue, then I am prepared to do so,

if our client so desires. I shall have nothing to do with the case, if the error is not admitted.'

With this I looked at my client. He was a little embarrassed. I had been in the case from the very first. The client fully trusted me, and knew me through and through. He said: 'Well, then, you will argue the case and admit the error. We will lose, if that is to be our lot. God defend the right.'

I was delighted. I had expected nothing less from him. The senior counsel again warned me, pitied me for my obduracy, but congratulated me all the same.

What happened in the court we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XLV

SHARP PRACTICE?

I had no doubt about the soundness of my advice, but I doubted very much my fitness for doing full justice to the case. I felt it would be a most hazardous undertaking to argue such a difficult case before the Supreme Court, and I appeared before the Bench in fear and trembling.

As soon as I referred to the error in the accounts, one of the judges said:

'Is not this sharp practice, Mr. Gandhi?'

I boiled within to hear this charge. It was intolerable to be accused of sharp practice when there was not the slightest warrant for it.

'With a judge prejudiced from the start like this, there is little chance of success in this difficult case,' I said to myself. But I composed my thoughts and answered:

'I am surprised that your Lordship should suspect sharp practice without hearing me out.'

'No question of a charge,' said the judge. 'It is a mere suggestion.'

'The suggestion here seems to me to amount to a charge. I would ask your Lordship to hear me out and then arraign me if there is any occasion for it.'

'I am sorry to have interrupted you,' replied the judge. 'Pray do go on with your explanation of the discrepancy.'

I had enough material in support of my explanation. Thanks to the judge having raised this question, I was able to rivet the Court's attention on my argument from the very start. I felt much encouraged and took the opportunity of entering into a detailed explanation. The Court gave me a patient hearing

and I was able to convince the judges that the discrepancy was due entirely to inadvertence. They therefore did not feel disposed to cancel the whole award which had involved considerable labour.

The opposing counsel seemed to feel secure in the belief that not much argument would be needed after the error had been admitted. But the judges continued to interrupt him, as they were convinced that the error was a slip which could be easily rectified. The counsel laboured hard to attack the award, but the judge who had originally started with the suspicion had now come round definitely to my side.

'Supposing Mr. Gandhi had not admitted the error, what would you have done?' he asked.

'It was impossible for us to secure the services of a more competent and honest expert accountant than the one appointed by us.'

'The Court must presume that you know your case best. If you cannot

point out anything beyond the slip which any expert accountant is liable to commit, the Court will be loath to compel the parties to go in for fresh litigation and fresh expenses, because of a patent mistake. We may not order a fresh hearing when such an error can be easily corrected,' continued the judge.

And so the counsel's objection was overruled. The Court either confirmed the award, with the error rectified, or ordered the arbitrator to rectify the error, I forget which.

I was delighted. So were my client and senior counsel; and I was confirmed in my conviction that it was not impossible to practise law without compromising truth.

Let the reader however remember that even truthfulness in the practice of the profession cannot cure it of the fundamental defect that vitiates it.

CHAPTER XLVI

CLIENTS TURNED CO-WORKERS

THE distinction between the legal practice in Natal and in the Transvaal was, that in Natal there was a joint bar; a barrister whilst he was admitted to the rank of advocate could also practise as an attorney; whereas in the Transvaal, as in Bombay, the spheres of attornies and advocates were distinct. A barrister had the right of election whether he would practise as an advocate or as an attorney. So, whilst in Natal I was admitted as an advocate, in the Transvaal I sought admission as an attorney. For as an advocate I could not have come in direct contact with the

Indians and the white attornies in South Africa would not have briefed me.

But even in the Transvaal it was open to attornies to appear before magistrates. On one occasion whilst I was conducting a case before a magistrate in Johannesburg I discovered that my client had deceived me. I saw him completely break down in the witness box. So without any argument I asked the magistrate to dismiss the case. The opposing counsel was astonished and the magistrate was pleased. I rebuked my client for bringing a false case to me. He knew that I never accepted false cases, and when I brought the thing home to him, he admitted his mistake, and I have an impression that he was not angry with me for having asked the magistrate to decide against him. At any rate my conduct in this case did not affect my practice for the worse, indeed it made my work easier. I also saw that my devotion to truth enhanced my reputation amongst the members of the

profession and in spite of the handicap of colour I was able in some cases to win even their affection.

During my professional work it was also my habit never to disguise my ignorance from my clients or my colleagues. Wherever I felt myself at sea I would advise my client to consult some other counsel, or if he preferred to stick to me, I would ask him to let me seek the assistance of senior counsel. This frankness earned me the unbounded affection and trust of my clients. They were always willing to pay the fee whenever consultation with senior counsel was necessary. This affection and trust served me in good stead in my public work.

I have indicated in the foregoing chapters that my object in practising in South Africa was service of the community. Even for this purpose, winning the confidence of the people was an indispensable condition. The large-hearted Indians magnified into service

professional work done for money, and when I advised them to suffer the hardships of imprisonment for the sake of their rights, many of them cheerfully accepted the advice, not so much because they had reasoned out the correctness of the course, as because of their confidence in, and affection for, me.

As I write this, many a sweet reminiscence comes to my mind. Hundreds of clients became friends and real co-workers in public service and their association sweetened a life that was otherwise full of difficulties and dangers.

CHAPTER XLVII

HOW A CLIENT WAS SAVED

THE reader, by now, will be quite familiar with Parsi Rustomji's name. He was one who became at once my client and co-worker, or perhaps it would be truer to say that he first became co-worker and then client. I won his confidence to such an extent that he sought and followed my advice also in private domestic matters. Even when he was ill, he would seek my aid, and though there was much difference between our ways of living, he did not hesitate to accept my quack treatment.

This friend once got into a very bad scrape. Though he kept me informed of

most of his affairs, he had studiously kept back one thing. He was a large importer of goods from Bombay and Calcutta and it turned out that not infrequently he resorted to smuggling. But as he was on the best terms with customs officials no one was inclined to suspect him. In charging duty, they used to take his invoices on trust. Some may even have connived at the smuggling.

But to use the telling simile of the Gujarati poet Akho, theft like quicksilver won't be suppressed, and Parsi Rustomji's proved no exception. The good friend ran post haste to me, the tears rolling down his cheeks as he said: 'Bhai, I have deceived you. My guilt has been discovered today. I have smuggled and I am doomed. I must go to jail and be ruined. You alone may be able to save me from this predicament. I have kept back nothing else from you, but I had thought I ought not to bother you with such tricks of the trade, and so I had

never told you about this smuggling. But now, how much I repent it!'

I calmed him and said: 'To save or not to save you is in His hands. As to me you know my way; I can but try to save you by means of confession.'

The good Parsi felt deeply mortified.

'But is not my confession before you enough?' he asked.

'You have wronged not me but Government. How will the confession made before me avail you?' I replied gently.

'Of course I will do just as you advise, but will you not consult with my old counsel Mr. ____? He is a friend too,' said Parsi Rustomji.

Inquiry revealed that the smuggling had been going on for a long time, but the actual offence detected involved a trifling sum. We went to his counsel. He perused the papers, and said: 'The case will be tried by jury, and a Natal jury will be the last to acquit an Indian. But I will not give up hope.'

I did not know this counsel intimately. Parsi Rustomji intercepted: 'I thank you, but I should like to be guided by Mr. Gandhi's advice in this case. He knows me intimately. Of course you will advise him whenever necessary.'

Having thus shelved the counsel's question, we went to Parsi Rustomji's shop.

And now explaining my view I said to him: 'I don't think this case should be taken to court at all. It rests with the Customs Officer to prosecute you or to let you go, and he in turn will have to be guided by the Attorney General. I am prepared to meet both. I propose that you should offer to pay the penalty they fix, and the odds are that they will be agreeable. But if they are not, you must be prepared to go to jail. I am of opinion that the shame lies not so much in going to jail as in committing the offence. The deed of shame has already been done. Imprisonment you should regard as a penance. The real penance lies in resolving never to smuggle again.'

I cannot say that Parsi Rustomji took all this quite well. He was a brave man, but his courage had failed him for the moment. His name and fame were at stake, and where would he be if the edifice he had reared with such care and labour should go to pieces?

'Well, I have told you,' he said, 'that I am entirely in your hands. You may do just as you like.'

I brought to bear on this case all my powers of persuasion. I met the Customs Officer and fearlessly apprised him of the whole affair. I also promised to place all the books at his disposal and told him how penitent Parsi Rustomji was feeling.

The Customs Officer said: 'I like the old Parsi. I am sorry he has made a fool of himself. You know where my duty lies. I must be guided by the Attorney General and so I would advise you to use all your persuasion with him.'

'I should be thankful,' said I, 'if you do not insist on dragging him into court.'

Having got him to promise this, I entered into correspondence with the Attorney General whom I also met. I am glad to say that he appreciated my complete frankness and was convinced that I had kept back nothing.

I now forget whether it was in connection with this or with some other case, that my persistence and frankness extorted from him the remark: 'I see you will never take a no for an answer.'

The case against Parsi Rustomji was compromised. He was to pay a penalty equal to twice the amount he had confessed to having smuggled. Rustomji reduced to writing the facts of the whole case, got the paper framed and hung it up in his office to serve as a perpetual reminder to his heirs and fellow merchants.

These friends of Rustomji warned me not to be taken in by this transitory contrition. When I told Rustomji about this warning he said: 'What would be my fate if I deceived you?'

The Story
of
My Experiments with Truth

PART V

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST EXPERIENCE

BEFORE I reached home, the party which had started from Phœnix had already arrived. According to our original plan I was to have preceded them, but my preoccupation in England with the War had upset all our calculations, and when I saw that I had to be detained in England indefinitely I was faced with the question of finding a place for accommodating the Phœnix party. I wanted them all to stay together in India, if possible, and to live the life they had led at Phœnix. I did not know of any Ashram where I could recommend them to go, and therefore I

cabled to them to meet Mr. Andrews and do as he advised.

So they were first put in the Gurukul, Kangri, where the late Swami Shraddhanandji treated them as his own children. After this they were put in the Shantiniketan Ashram, where the Poet and his people showered the same love upon them. The experiences they gathered at both these places served them and me in good stead.

The Poet, Shraddhanandji and Principal Sushil Rudra, as I used to say to Andrews, composed his trinity. When in South Africa he was never tired of speaking of them, and of the many sweet memories of South Africa, Mr. Andrews' talks, day in and day out, of this great trinity, are amongst the sweetest and most vivid. Mr. Andrews therefore put the Phœnix party in touch also with Sushil Rudra. Principal Rudra had no Ashram, but he had a home which he placed completely at the disposal of the Phœnix family. Within a day of their

arrival, his people made them feel so thoroughly at home that they did not seem to miss Phœnix at all.

It was only when I landed in Bombay that I learnt that the Phœnix party was at Shantiniketan. I was therefore impatient to meet them as soon as I could after my meeting with Gokhale.

The receptions in Bombay gave me an occasion for offering what might be called a little Satyagraha.

At the party given in my honour, at Mr. Jehangir Petit's place, I did not dare to speak in Gujarati. In those palatial surroundings of dazzling splendour I, who had lived my best life among indentured labourers, felt myself a complete rustic. With my Kathiawadi cloak, turban and dhoti, I looked somewhat more civilised than I do today, but the pomp and splendour of Mr. Petit's mansion made me feel absolutely out of my element. However I acquitted myself tolerably well, having taken shelter under Sir Phirozeshah's protecting wing.

Then there was the Gujarati function. The Gujaratis would not let me go without a reception, which was organised by the late Uttamlal Trivedi. I had acquainted myself with the programme beforehand. Mr. Jinnah was present, being a Gujarati, I forget whether as president or as the principal speaker. He made a short and sweet little speech in English. As far as I remember most of the other speeches were also in English. When my turn came, I expressed my thanks in Gujarati, explaining my partiality for Gujarati and Hindustani, and entering my humble protest against the use of English in a Gujarati gathering. This I did, not without some hesitation, for I was afraid lest it should be considered discourteous for an inexperienced man, returned home after a long exile, to enter his protest against established practices. But no one seemed to misundertand my insistence on replying in Gujarati. In fact I was glad to note that

every one seemed reconciled to my protest.

The meeting thus emboldened me to think that I should not find it difficult to place my new-fangled notions before my countrymen.

After a brief stay in Bombay, full of these preliminary experiences, I went to Poona where Gokhale had summoned me.

CHAPTER II

WITH GOKHALE IN POONA

THE moment I reached Bombay Gokhale sent me word that the Governor was desirous of seeing me, and that it might be proper for me to respond before I left for Poona. Accordingly I called on His Excellency. After the usual inquiries, he said:

'I ask one thing of you. I would like you to come and see me whenever you propose to take any steps concerning Government.'

I replied:

'I can very easily give the promise, inasmuch as it is my rule, as a Satyagrahi, to understand the viewpoint

of the party I propose to deal with, and to try to agree with him as far as may be possible. I strictly observed the rule in South Africa and I mean to do the same here.'

Lord Willingdon thanked me and said:

'You may come to me whenever you like, and you will see that my Government do not wilfully do anything wrong.'

To which I replied: 'It is that faith which sustains me.'

After this I went to Poona. It is impossible for me to set down all the reminiscences of this precious time. Gokhale, and the members of the Servants of India Society overwhelmed me with affection. So far as I recollect, Gokhale had summoned all of them to meet me. I had a frank talk with them all on every sort of subject.

Gokhale was very keen that I should join the Society, and so was I. But the members felt that as there was a great

difference between my ideals and methods of work, and theirs, it might not be proper for me to join the Society. Gokhale believed, that in spite of my insistence on my own principles, I was equally ready and able to tolerate theirs.

'But,' he said, 'the members of the Society have not yet understood your readiness for compromise. They are tenacious of their principles, and quite independent. I am hoping that they will accept you, but if they don't, you will not for a moment think that they are lacking in respect or love for you. They are hesitating to take any risk, lest their high regard for you should be jeopardized. But whether you are formally admitted as a member or not, I am going to look upon you as one.'

I informed Gokhale of my intentions. Whether I was admitted as a member or not, I wanted to have an Ashram where I could settle down with my Phœnix family, preferably somewhere in

Gujarat, as, being a Gujarati, I thought I was best fitted to serve the country through serving Gujarat. Gokhale liked the idea. He said: 'You should certainly do so. Whatever may be the result of your talks with the members, you must look to me for the expenses of the Ashram which I will regard as my own.'

My heart overflowed with joy. It was a pleasure to feel free from the responsibility of raising funds, and to realise that I should not be obliged to set about the work all on my own, but that I should be able to count on a sure guide whenever I was in difficulty. This took a great load off my mind.

So the late Dr. Dev was summoned and told to open an account for me in the Society's books and to give me whatever I might require for the Ashram and for public expenses.

I now prepared to go to Shantiniketan. On the eve of my departure Gokhale arranged a party of selected friends, taking good care to order refreshments of

my liking, *i. e.*, fruits and nuts. The party was held just a few paces from his room, and yet he was hardly in a condition to walk across and attend it. But his affection for me got the better of him and he insisted on coming. He came, but fainted and had to be carried away. Such fainting was not a new thing with him, and so when he came to, he sent word that we must go on with the party.

This party was of course no more than a conversazione in the open space opposite the Society's guest-house, during which friends had heart to heart chats over light refreshments of groundnuts, dates and fresh fruits of the season.

But the fainting fit was to be no common event in my life.

CHAPTER III

WAS IT A THREAT?

FROM Poona I went to Rajkot and Porbandar, where I had to meet my brother's widow and other relatives.

During the Satyagraha in South Africa I had altered my style of dress so as to make it more in keeping with that of the indentured labourers, and in England also I had adhered to the same style for indoor use. For landing in Bombay I had a Kathiawadi suit of clothes consisting of a shirt, a dhoti, a cloak and a white scarf, all made of Indian mill cloth. But as I was to travel third from Bombay, I regarded the scarf and the cloak as too much of

an incumbrance, so I shed them, and invested in an eight to ten annas Kashmiri cap. One dressed in that fashion was sure to pass muster as a poor man.

On account of the plague prevailing at that time, third class passengers were being medically inspected at Viramgam or Wadhwan — I forget which. I had a slight fever. The inspector on finding that I had a temperature asked me to report myself to the Medical Officer at Rajkot and noted down my name.

Some one had perhaps sent the information that I was passing through Wadhwan, for the tailor Motilal, a noted public worker of the place, met me at the station. He told me about the Viramgam customs, and the hardships railway passengers had to suffer on account of it. I had little inclination to talk because of my fever, and so tried to finish with a brief reply which took the form of a question:

'Are you prepared to go to jail?'

I had taken Motilal to be one of those impetuous youths who do not think before speaking. But not so Motilal. He replied with firm deliberation:

'We will certainly go to jail, provided you lead us. As Kathiawadis, we have the first right on you. Of course we do not mean to detain you now, but you must promise to halt here on your return. You will be delighted to see the work and the spirit of our youths, and you may trust us to respond as soon as you summon us.'

Motilal captivated me. His comrade eulogising him said:

'Our friend is but a tailor. But he is such a master of his profession that he easily earns Rs. 15 a month — which is just what he needs — working an hour a day, and gives the rest of his time to public work. He leads us all, putting our education to shame.'

Later I came in close contact with Motilal and I saw that there was no exaggeration in the eulogy. He made

a point of spending some days in the then newly started Ashram every month to teach the children tailoring and to do some of the tailoring of the Ashram himself. He would talk to me every day of Viramgam, and the hardships of the passengers which had become absolutely unbearable for him. He was cut off in the prime of youth by a sudden illness, and public life at Wadhwan suffered without him.

On reaching Rajkot, I reported myself to the Medical Officer the next morning. I was not unknown there. The doctor felt ashamed and was angry with the inspector. This was unnecessary, for the inspector had only done his duty. He did not know me, and even if he had known me, he should not have done otherwise. The Medical Officer would not let me go to him again and insisted on sending an inspector to me instead.

Inspection of third class passengers for sanitary reasons is essential on such occasions. If big men choose to travel

third, whatever their position in life, they must voluntarily submit themselves to all the regulations that the poor are subject to, and the officials ought to be impartial. My experience is that the officials, instead of looking upon third class passengers as fellowmen, regard them as so many sheep. They talk to them contemptuously, and brook no reply or argument. The third class passenger has to obey the official as though he were his servant, and the latter may with impunity belabour and blackmail him, and book him his ticket only after putting him to the greatest possible inconvenience, including often missing the train. All this I have seen with my own eyes. No reform is possible unless some of the educated and the rich voluntarily accept the status of the poor, travel third, refuse to enjoy the amenities denied to the poor, and instead of taking avoidable hardships, discourtesies and injustice as a matter of course, fight for their removal.

Wherever I went in Kathiawad I heard complaints about the Viramgam customs hardships. I therefore decided immediately to make use of Lord Willingdon's offer. I collected and read all the literature available on the subject, convinced myself that the complaints were well-founded, and opened correspondence with the Bombay Government. I called on the Private Secretary to Lord Willingdon and waited on His Excellency also. The latter expressed his sympathy but shifted the blame on Delhi. 'If it had been in our hands we should have removed the cordon long ago. You should approach the Government of India,' said the Secretary.

I communicated with the Government of India, but got no reply beyond an acknowledgment. It was only when I had an occasion to meet Lord Chelmsford later that redress could be had. When I placed the facts before him, he expressed his astonishment. He had known nothing of the matter. He gave me a patient

hearing, telephoned that very moment for papers about Viramgam, and promised to remove the cordon if the authorities had no explanation or defence to offer. Within a few days of this interview I read in the papers that the Viramgam customs cordon had been removed.

I regarded this event as the advent of Satyagraha in India. For during my interview with the Bombay Government the Secretary had expressed his disapproval of a reference to Satyagraha in a speech which I delivered in Bagasra (in Kathiawad) and of which he had a report.

'Is not this a threat?' he had asked. 'And do you think a powerful Government will yield to threats?'

'This was no threat,' I had replied. 'It was educating the people. It is my duty to place before the people all the legitimate remedies for grievances. A nation that wants to come into its own ought to know all the ways and means to freedom. Usually they include violence

as the last remedy. Satyagraha, on the other hand, is an absolutely non-violent weapon. I regard it as my duty to explain its practice and its limitations. I have no doubt that the British Government is a powerful Government, but I have no doubt also that Satyagraha is a sovereign remedy.'

The clever Secretary sceptically nodded his head and said: 'We shall see.'

CHAPTER IV

SHANTINIKETAN

FROM Rajkot I proceeded to Shantiniketan. The teachers and students overwhelmed me with affection. The reception was a beautiful combination of simplicity, art and love. It was here I met Kakasaheb Kalelkar for the first time.

I did not know then why Kalelkar was called 'Kakasaheb.' But I learnt later on that Sjt. Keshavrao Deshpande, who was a contemporary and a close friend of mine in England, and who had conducted a school in the Baroda State called 'Ganganath Vidyalaya,' had given the teachers family names with a view

to investing the Vidyalaya with a family atmosphere. Sjt. Kalelkar who was a teacher there came to be called 'Kaka' (lit. paternal uncle), Phadke was called 'Mama' (lit. maternal uncle) and Harihar Sharma received the name 'Anna' (lit. brother). Others also got similar names. Anandanand (Swami) as Kaka's friend and Patvardhan (Appa) as Mama's friend later joined the family, and all in course of time became my co-workers one after another. Sjt. Deshpande himself used to be called 'Saheb.' When the Vidyalaya had to be dissolved, the family also broke up, but they never gave up their spiritual relationship or their assumed names.

Kakasaheb went out to gain experience of different institutions, and at the time I went to Shantiniketan, he happened to be there. Chintaman Shastri, belonging to the same fraternity, was there also. Both helped in teaching Sanskrit.

The Phœnix family had been assigned separate quarters at Shantiniketan. Maganlal Gandhi was at their head, and he had made it his business to see that all the rules of the Phœnix Ashram should be scrupulously observed. I saw that by dint of his love, knowledge and perseverance he had made his fragrance felt in the whole of Shantiniketan.

Andrews was there, and also Pearson. Amongst the Bengali teachers with whom we came in fairly close contact were Jagadanandbabu, Nepalbabu, Santoshbabu, Kshitimohanbabu, Nagenbabu, Sharadbabu and Kalibabu.

As is my wont, I quickly mixed with the teachers and students, and engaged them in a discussion on self-help. I put it to the teachers, that if they and the boys dispensed with the services of paid cooks, and cooked their food themselves, it would enable the teachers to control the kitchen from the point of view of the boys' physical and moral health,

and it would afford to the students an object-lesson in self-help. One or two of them were inclined to shake their heads. Some of them strongly approved of the proposal. The boys welcomed it, if only because of their instinctive taste for novelty. So we launched the experiment. When I invited the Poet to express his opinion, he said that he did not mind it provided the teachers were favourable. To the boys he said, 'The experiment contains the key to Swaraj.'

Pearson began to wear away his body in making the experiment a success. He threw himself into it with zest. A batch was formed to cut vegetables, another to clean the grain, and so on. Nagenbabu and others undertook to see to the sanitary cleaning of the kitchen and its surroundings. It was a delight to me to see them working spade in hand.

But it was too much to expect the hundred and twenty five boys with their teachers to take to this work of physical labour like ducks to water. There used

to be daily discussions. Some began early to show fatigue. But Pearson was not the man to be tired. One would always find him with his smiling face doing something or other in or about the kitchen. He had taken upon himself the cleaning of the bigger utensils. A party of students played on their *sitar* before this cleaning party in order to beguile the tedium of the operation. All alike took the thing up with zest and Shantiniketan became a busy hive.

Changes like these when once begun always develop. The Phœnix party's kitchen was not only a self-conducted one, but the food cooked in it was of the simplest. Condiments were eschewed. Rice, *dal*, vegetables and even wheat flour were all cooked at one and the same time in a steam cooker. And Shantiniketan boys started a similar kitchen with a view to introducing reform in the Bengali kitchen. One or two teachers and some students ran this kitchen.

The experiment was however dropped after some time. I am of opinion that the famous institution lost nothing by having conducted the experiment for a brief interval, and some of the experiences gained could not but be of help to the teachers.

I had intended to stay at Shantiniketan for some time, but fate willed it otherwise. I had hardly been there a week when I received from Poona a telegram announcing Gokhale's death. Shantiniketan was immersed in grief. All the members came over to me to express their condolences. A special meeting was called in the Ashram temple to mourn the national loss. It was a solemn function. The same day I left for Poona with my wife and Maganlal. All the rest stayed at Shantiniketan.

Andrews accompanied me up to Burdwan. 'Do you think,' he asked me, 'that a time will come for Satyagraha in India? And if so, have you any idea when it will come?'

'It is difficult to say,' said I. 'For one year I am to do nothing. For Gokhale took from me a promise that I should travel in India for gaining experience, and express no opinion on public questions until I have finished the period of probation. Even after the year is over, I will be in no hurry to speak and pronounce opinions. And so I do not suppose there will be any occasion for Satyagraha for five years or so.'

I may note in this connection that Gokhale used to laugh at some of my ideas in *Hind Swaraj* ('Indian Home Rule') and say: 'After you have stayed a year in India, your views will correct themselves.'

CHAPTER V

WOES OF THIRD CLASS PASSENGERS

AT Burdwan we came face to face with the hardships that a third class passenger has to go through even in securing his ticket. 'Third class tickets are not booked so early,' we were told. I went to the Station Master, though that too was a difficult business. Some one kindly directed me to where he was, and I represented to him our difficulty. He also made the same reply. As soon as the booking window opened, I went to purchase the tickets. But it was no easy thing to get them. Might was right, and passengers, who were forward and indifferent to others, coming one

after another, continued to push me out. I was therefore about the last of the first crowd to get a ticket.

The train arrived, and getting into it was another trial. There was a free exchange of abuse and pushes between passengers already in the train and those trying to get in. We ran up and down the platform, but were everywhere met with the same reply: 'No room here.' I went to the guard. He said, 'You must try to get in where you can or take the next train.'

'But I have urgent business,' I respectfully replied. He had no time to listen to me. I was disconcerted. I told Maganlal to get in wherever possible, and I got into an inter-class compartment with my wife. The guard saw us getting in. At Asansol station he came to charge us excess fares. I said to him:

'It was your duty to find us room. We could not get any, and so we are sitting here. If you can accommodate us

in a third class compartment, we shall be only too glad to go there.'

'You may not argue with me,' said the guard. 'I cannot accommodate you. You must pay the excess fare, or get out.'

I wanted to reach Poona somehow. I was not therefore prepared to fight the guard, so I paid the excess fare he demanded, *i.e.*, up to Poona. But I resented the injustice.

In the morning we reached Mogalsarai. Maganlal had managed to get a seat in the third class where I now shifted. I acquainted the ticket examiner with all the facts, and asked him to give me a certificate to the effect that I had shifted to a third class compartment at Mogalsarai. This he declined to do. I applied to the railway authorities for redress, and got a reply to this effect: 'It is not our practice to refund excess fares without the production of a certificate, but we make an exception in your case. It is not possible, however,

to refund the excess fare from Burdwan to Mogalsarai.'

Since this I have had experiences of third class travelling which, if I wrote them all down, would easily fill a volume. But I can only touch on them casually in these chapters. It has been and always will be my profound regret that physical incapacity should have compelled me to give up third class travelling.

The woes of third class passengers are undoubtedly due to the high-handedness of railway authorities. But the rudeness, dirty habits, selfishness and ignorance of the passengers themselves are no less to blame. The pity is that they often do not realise that they are behaving ill, dirtily or selfishly. They believe that everything they do is in the natural way. All this may be traced to the indifference towards them of us 'educated' people.

We reached Kalyan dead tired. Maganlal and I got some water from the station water-pipe and had our bath.

As I was proceeding to arrange for my wife's bath, Sjt. Kaul of the Servants of India Society recognising us came up. He too was going to Poona. He offered to take my wife to the second class bath room. I hesitated to accept the courteous offer. I knew that my wife had no right to avail herself of the second class bath room, but I ultimately connived at the impropriety. This, I know, does not become a votary of truth. Not that my wife was eager to use the bath room but a husband's partiality for his wife got the better of his partiality for truth. The face of truth is hidden behind the golden veil of *maya*, says the Upanishad.

CHAPTER VI

WOOING

ON arrival in Poona, we found ourselves, after the performance of the *shraddha* ceremonies, discussing the future of the Society, and the question as to whether I should join it or not. This question of membership proved a very delicate matter for me to handle. Whilst Gokhale was there I did not have to seek admission as a member. I had simply to obey his wish, a position I loved to be in. Launching on the stormy sea of Indian public life I was in need of a sure pilot. I had had one in Gokhale and had felt secure in his keeping. Now that he was gone, I was thrown on my own resources,

and I felt that it was my duty to seek admission. That, I thought, would please Gokhale's spirit. So without hesitation and with firmness I began the wooing.

Most of the members of the Society were in Poona at this juncture. I set about pleading with them and tried to dispel their fears about me. But I saw that they were divided. One section favoured my admission, the other was strongly against it. I knew that neither yielded to the other in its affection for me, but possibly their loyalty to the Society was greater, at any rate not less than their love for me.

All our discussions were therefore free from bitterness, and strictly confined to matters of principle. The section that was opposed to me held that they and I were as the poles asunder in various vital matters, and they felt that my membership was likely to imperil the very objects for which the Society was founded. This naturally was more than they could bear.

We dispersed after prolonged discussions, the final decision being postponed to a later date.

I was considerably agitated as I returned home. Was it right for me to be admitted by a majority vote? Would it be consonant with my loyalty to Gokhale? I saw it clearly that when there was such a sharp division amongst the members of the Society over admitting me, by far the best course for me was to withdraw my application for admission and save those opposed to me from a delicate situation. Therein I thought lay my loyalty to the Society and Gokhale. The decision came to me in a flash, and immediately I wrote to Mr. Shastri asking him not to have the adjourned meeting at all. Those who had opposed my application fully appreciated the decision. It saved them from an awkward position, and bound us in closer bonds of friendship. The withdrawal of my application made me truly a member of the Society.

Experience now tells me that it was well that I did not formally become a member and that the opposition of those who had been against me was justified. Experience has shown too that our views on matters of principle were widely divergent. But the recognition of the differences has meant no estrangement or bitterness between us. We have remained as brothers, and the Society's Poona home has always been for me a place of pilgrimage.

It is true that I did not officially become a member of the Society, but I have ever been a member in spirit. Spiritual relationship is far more precious than the physical. Physical relationship divorced from the spiritual is like body without soul.

CHAPTER VII

KUMBHA MELA

I next went to Rangoon, where I wanted to meet Dr. Mehta, and on my way I halted at Calcutta. I was the guest of the late Babu Bhupendranath Basu. Bengali hospitality reached its climax here. In those days I was a strict fruitarian, so all the fruits and nuts available in Calcutta were ordered for me. The ladies of the house kept awake all night skinning various nuts. Every possible care was taken in dressing fresh fruit in the Indian style. Numerous delicacies were prepared for my companions, amongst whom was my son Ramdas. Much as I could appreciate this

affectionate hospitality, I could not bear the thought of a whole household being occupied in entertaining two or three guests. But as yet I saw no escape from such embarrassing attentions.

On the boat going to Rangoon I was a deck passenger. If excess of attention embarrassed us in Sjt. Basu's house, grossest inattention, even to the elementary comforts of deck passengers, was our lot on the boat. What was an apology for a bath room was unbearably dirty, the latrines were stinking sinks. To use the latrine one had to wade through urine and excreta or jump over them.

This was more than flesh and blood could bear. I approached the Chief Officer without avail. If anything was lacking to complete the picture of stink and filth, the passengers furnished it by their thoughtless habits. They spat where they sat, dirtied the surroundings with the leavings of their food, tobacco and betel leaves. There was no end to

the noise, and every one tried to monopolise as much room as possible. Their luggage took up more room than they. We had thus two days of the severest trial.

On reaching Rangoon I wrote to the Agent of the Steamship Company, acquainting him with all the facts. Thanks to this letter and to Dr. Mehta's efforts in the matter, the return journey though on deck was less unbearable.

In Rangoon my fruitarian diet was again a source of additional trouble to the host. But since Dr. Mehta's home was as good as my own, I could control somewhat the lavishness of the menu. However as I had not set any limit to the articles I might eat, the palate and the eye refused to put an effective check on the supply of varieties ordered. There were no regular hours for meals. Personally I preferred having the last meal before nightfall. Nevertheless as a rule it could not be had before eight or nine.

This year — 1915 — was the year of the Kumbha fair which is held at Hardvar once every 12 years. I was by no means eager to attend the fair, but I was anxious to meet Mahatma Munshiramji who was in his Gurukul. Gokhale's Society had sent a big volunteer corps for service at the Kumbha. Pandit Hridayanath Kunzru was at the head, and the late Dr. Dev was the medical officer. I was invited to send the Phœnix party to assist them and so Maganlal Gandhi had already preceded me. On my return from Rangoon, I joined the band.

The journey from Calcutta to Hardvar was particularly trying. Sometimes the compartments had no lights. From Saharanpur we were huddled into carriages for goods or cattle. These had no roofs, and what with the blazing midday sun overhead and the scorching iron floor beneath, we were all but roasted. The pangs of thirst, caused by even such a journey as this, could

not persuade orthodox Hindus to take water, if it was 'Musalmani.' They waited until they could get the 'Hindu' water. These very Hindus, let it be noted, do not so much as hesitate or inquire, when during illness the doctor administers them wine, or prescribes beef tea or a Musalman or Christian compounder gives them water.

Our stay in Shantiniketan had taught us that the scavenger's work would be our special function in India. Now for the volunteers in Hardvar tents had been pitched in a *dharmashala,* and Dr. Dev had dug some pits to be used as latrines. He had had to depend on paid scavengers for looking after these. Here was work for the Phœnix party. We offered to cover up the excreta with earth and to see to their disposal, and Dr. Dev gladly accepted our offer. The offer was naturally made by me, but it was Maganlal Gandhi who had to execute it. My business was mostly to keep sitting in the tent giving *darshan* and holding

religious and other discussions with numerous pilgrims who called on me. This left me not a minute which I could call my own. I was followed even to the bathing *ghat* by these *darshan* seekers, nor did they leave me alone whilst I was having my meals. Thus it was in Hardvar that I realised what a deep impression my humble services in South Africa had made throughout the whole of India.

But this was no enviable position to be in. I felt as though I was between the devil and the deep sea. Where no one recognised me, I had to put up with the hardships that fall to the lot of the millions in this land, *e. g.*, in railway travelling. Where I was surrounded by people who had heard of me I was the victim of their craze for *darshan*. Which of the two conditions was more pitiable, I have often been at a loss to determine. This at least I know that the *darshanvalas'* blind love has often made me angry, and more often

sore at heart. Whereas travelling, though often trying, has been uplifting and has hardly ever roused me to anger.

I was in those days strong enough to roam about a lot, and was fortunately not so known as not to be able to go in the streets without creating much fuss. During these roamings I came to observe more of the pilgrims' absent-mindedness, hypocrisy and slovenliness, than of their piety. The swarm of *sadhus*, who had descended there, seemed to have been born but to enjoy the good things of life.

Here I saw a cow with five feet! I was astonished, but knowing men soon disillusioned me. The poor five-footed cow was a sacrifice to the greed of the wicked. I learnt that the fifth foot was nothing else but a foot cut off from a live calf and grafted upon the shoulder of the cow! The result of this double cruelty was exploited to fleece the ignorant of their money. There was no Hindu but would be attracted by

a five-footed cow, and no Hindu but would lavish his charity on such a miraculous cow.

The day of the fair was now upon us. It proved a red letter day for me. I had not gone to Hardvar with the sentiments of a pilgrim. I have never thought of frequenting places of pilgrimage in search of piety. But the seventeen lakhs of men that were reported to be there could not all be hypocrites or mere sightseers. I had no doubt that countless people amongst them had gone there to earn merit, and for self-purification. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say to what extent this kind of faith uplifts the soul.

I therefore passed the whole night immersed in deep thought. There were those pious souls in the midst of the hypocrisy that surrounded them. They would be free of guilt before their Maker. If the visit to Hardvar was in itself a sin, I must publicly protest against it, and leave Hardvar on the day of Kumbha.

If the pilgrimage to Hardvar and to the Kumbha fair was not sinful, I must impose some act of self-denial on myself in atonement for the iniquity prevailing there, and purify myself. This was quite natural for me. My life is based on disciplinary resolutions. I thought of the unnecessary trouble I had caused to my hosts at Calcutta and Rangoon, who had so lavishly entertained me. I therefore decided to limit the articles of my diet and to have my final meal before sunset. I was convinced that if I did not impose these restrictions on myself, I should put my future hosts to considerable inconvenience and should engage them in serving me rather than engage myself in service. So I pledged myself never whilst in India to take more than five articles in twenty four hours, and never to eat after dark. I gave the fullest thought to the difficulties I might have to face. But I wanted to leave no loophole. I rehearsed to myself what would happen during an illness, if I counted medicine

among the five articles, and made no exception in favour of special articles of diet. I finally decided that there should be no exception on any account whatsoever.

I have been under these vows for now thirteen years. They have subjected me to a severe test, but I am able to testify that they have also served as my shield. I am of opinion that they have added a few years to my life and saved me from many an illness.

CHAPTER VIII

LAKSHMAN JHULA

IT was a positive relief to reach the Gurukul and meet Mahatma Munshiramji with his giant frame. I at once felt the wonderful contrast between the peace of the Gurukul and the din and noise of Hardvar.

The Mahatma overwhelmed me with affection. The *Brahmacharis* were all attention. It was here that I was first introduced to Acharya Ramadevji, and I could immediately see what a force and a power he must be. We had different viewpoints in several matters, nevertheless our acquaintance soon ripened into friendship.

I had long discussions with Acharya Ramadevji and other professors about the necessity of introducing industrial training into the Gurukul. When the time came for going away it was a wrench to leave the place.

I had heard much in praise of the Lakshman Jhula (a hanging bridge over the Ganges) some distance from Hrishikesh, and many friends pressed me not to leave Hardvar without having gone as far as the bridge. I wanted to do this pilgrimage on foot and so I did it in two stages.

Many *sannyasis* called on me at Hrishikesh. One of them was particularly attracted towards me. The Phœnix party was there and their presence drew from the Swami many questions.

We had discussions about religion and he realised that I felt deeply about matters of religion. He saw me bare-headed and shirtless as I had returned from my bath in the Ganges. He was pained to miss the *shikha* (tuft of hair)

on my head and the sacred thread about my neck and said:

'It pains me to see you, a believing Hindu, going without the sacred thread and the *shikha*. These are the two external symbols of Hinduism and every Hindu ought to wear them.'

Now there is a history as to how I came to dispense with both. When I was an urchin of ten, I envied the Brahman lads sporting bunches of keys tied to their sacred threads and I wished I could do likewise. The practice of wearing the sacred thread was not then common among the *vaishya* families in Kathiawad. But a movement had just been started for making it obligatory for the first three *varnas*. As a result several members of the Gandhi clan adopted the sacred thread. The Brahman who was teaching two or three of us boys *Ramaraksha* invested us with the thread, and although I had no occasion to possess a bunch of keys, I got one and began to sport it. Later, when the thread gave way, I do

not remember whether I missed it very much. But I know that I did not go in for a fresh one.

As I grew up several well-meaning attempts were made both in India and South Africa to re-invest me with the sacred thread, but with little success. If the *shudras* may not wear it, I argued, what right have the other *varnas* to do so? And I saw no adequate reason for adopting what was to me an unnecessary custom. I had no objection to the thread as such, but the reasons for wearing it were lacking.

As a *vaishnava* I had naturally worn round my neck the *kanthi*, and the *shikha* was considered obligatory by elders. On the eve of my going to England however, I got rid of the *shikha*, lest when I was bare-headed it should expose me to ridicule and make me look, as I then thought, a barbarian in the eyes of the Englishmen. In fact this cowardly feeling carried me so far that in South Africa I got my cousin

Chhaganlal Gandhi, who was religiously wearing the *shikha*, to do away with it. I feared that it might come in the way of his public work, and so, even at the risk of paining him, I made him get rid of it.

I therefore made a clean breast of the whole matter to the Swami and said:

'I will not wear the sacred thread, for I see no necessity for it, when countless Hindus can go without it and yet remain Hindus. Moreover, the sacred thread should be a symbol of spiritual regeneration, presupposing a deliberate attempt on the part of the wearer at a higher and purer life. I doubt whether in the present state of Hinduism and of India, Hindus can vindicate the right to wear a symbol charged with such a meaning. That right can come only after Hinduism has purged itself of untouchability, has removed all distinctions of superiority and inferiority, and shed a host of other evils and shams that have become rampant in it. My

mind therefore rebels against the idea of wearing the sacred thread. But I am sure, your suggestion about the *shikha* is worth considering. I once used to have it, and I discarded it from a false sense of shame. And so I feel that I should start growing it again. I shall discuss the matter with my comrades.'

The Swami did not appreciate my position with regard to the sacred thread. The very reasons that seemed to me to point to not wearing it appeared to him to favour its wearing. Even today my position remains about the same as it was at Hrishikesh. So long as there are different religions, every one of them may need some outward distinctive symbol. But when the symbol is made into a fetish and an instrument of proving the superiority of one's religion over others', it is fit only to be discarded. The sacred thread does not appear to me today to be a means of uplifting Hinduism. I am therefore indifferent to it.

As for the *shikha*, cowardice having been the reason for discarding it, after consultation with friends I decided to re-grow it.

But to return to Lakshman Jhula. I was charmed with the natural scenery about Hrishikesh and the Lakshman Jhula, and bowed my head in reverence to our ancestors for their sense of the beautiful in Nature, and for their foresight in investing beautiful manifestations of nature with a religious significance.

But the way in which men were using these beauty spots was far from giving me peace. As at Hardvar so at Hrishikesh, people dirtied the roads and the fair banks of the Ganges. They did not even hesitate to desecrate the sacred water of the Ganges. It filled me with agony to see people performing natural functions on the thoroughfares and river banks, when they could easily have gone a little farther away from public haunts.

Lakshman Jhula was, I saw, nothing but an iron suspension bridge over the Ganges. I was told that originally there had been a fine rope-bridge. But a philanthropic Marwadi got it into his head to destroy the rope-bridge and erect an iron one at a heavy cost and then entrusted the keys to the Government! I am at a loss to say anything about the rope-bridge as I have never seen it, but the iron bridge is entirely out of place in such surroundings and mars their beauty. The making over the keys of this pilgrims' bridge to Government was too much even for my loyalty of those days.

The *Svargashram* which one reaches after crossing the bridge was a wretched place, being nothing but a number of shabby-looking sheds of galvanised iron sheets. These, I was told, were made for *sadhakas* (aspirants). There were hardly any living there at the moment. Those who were in the main building gave one an unfavourable impression.

But the Hardvar experiences proved for me to be of inestimable value. They helped me in no small way to decide where I was to live and what I was to do.

CHAPTER IX

FOUNDING OF THE ASHRAM

THE pilgrimage to the Kumbha Fair was my second visit to Hardvar.

The Satyagraha Ashram was founded on the 25th of May, 1915. Shraddhanandji wanted me to settle in Hardvar. Some of my Calcutta friends recommended Vaidynathadham. Others strongly urged me to choose Rajkot. But when I happened to pass through Ahmedabad, many friends pressed me to settle down there, and they volunteered to find the expenses of the Ashram, as well as a house for us to live in.

I had a predilection for Ahmedabad. Being a Gujarati I thought I should be

able to render the greatest service to the country through the Gujarati language. And then, as Ahmedabad was an ancient centre of handloom weaving, it was likely to be the most favourable field for the revival of the cottage industry of hand-spinning. There was also the hope, that the city being the capital of Gujarat, monetary help from its wealthy citizens would be more available here than elsewhere.

The question of untouchability was naturally among the subjects discussed with the Ahmedabad friends. I made it clear to them that I should take the first opportunity of admitting an untouchable candidate to the Ashram if he was otherwise worthy.

'Where is the untouchable who will satisfy your condition?' said a *vaishnava* friend self-complacently.

I finally decided to found the Ashram at Ahmedabad.

So far as accommodation was concerned, Sjt. Jivanlal Desai, a barrister

in Ahmedabad, was the principal man to help me. He offered to let, and we decided to hire, his Kochrab bungalow.

The first thing we had to settle was the name of the Ashram. I consulted friends. Amongst the names suggested were 'Sevashram' (the abode of service), 'Tapovan' (the abode of austerities) etc. I liked the name 'Sevashram,' but for the absence of emphasis on the method of service. 'Tapovan' seemed to be a pretentious title, because though *tapas* was dear to us, we could not presume to be *tapasvis* (men of austerity). Our creed was devotion to truth, and our business was the search for and insistence on truth. I wanted to acquaint India with the method I had tried in South Africa, and I desired to test in India the extent to which its application might be possible. So my companions and I selected the name 'Satyagraha Ashram,' as conveying both our goal and our method of service.

For the conduct of the Ashram a code of rules and observances was necessary. A draft was therefore prepared, and friends were invited to express their opinions on it. Amongst the many opinions that were received, that of Sir Gurudas Banerji is still in my memory. He liked the rules, but suggested that humility should be added as one of the observances, as he believed that the younger generation sadly lacked humility. Though I had noticed this fault, I feared humility would cease to be humility the moment it became a matter of vow. The true connotation of humility is self-effacement. Self-effacement is *moksha* (salvation), and whilst it cannot, by itself, be an observance, there may be other observances necessary for its attainment. If the acts of an aspirant after *moksha* or a servant have no humility or selflessness about them, there is no longing for *moksha* or service. Service without humility is selfishness and egotism.

There were at this time about thirteen Tamilians in our party. Five Tamil youngsters had accompanied me from South Africa, and the rest came from different parts of the country. We were in all about twenty five men and women.

This is how the Ashram was started. All had their meals in a common kitchen, and strove to live as one family.

CHAPTER X

ON THE ANVIL

THE Ashram had been in existence only a few months when we were put to a test, such as I had scarcely expected. I received a letter from Amritlal Thakkar to this effect: 'A humble and honest untouchable family is desirous of joining your Ashram. Will you accept them?'

I was perturbed. I had never expected, that an untouchable family, with an introduction from no less a man than Thakkar Bapa, would so soon be seeking admission to the Ashram. I shared the letter with my companions. They welcomed it.

I wrote to Amritlal Thakkar expressing our willingness to accept the family, provided all the members were ready to abide by the rules of the Ashram.

The family consisted of Dudabhai, his wife Danibehn and their daughter Lakshmi, then a mere toddling babe. Dudabhai had been a teacher in Bombay. They all agreed to abide by the rules and were accepted.

But their admission created a flutter amongst the friends who had been helping the Ashram. The very first difficulty was found with regard to the use of the well, which was partly controlled by the owner of the bungalow. The man in charge of the water-lift objected that drops of water from our bucket would pollute him. So he took to swearing at us, and molesting Dudabhai. I told every one to put up with the abuse and continue drawing water at all cost. When he saw that we did not return his abuse, the

man became ashamed and ceased to bother us.

All monetary help however was stopped. The friend, who had asked that question about an untouchable being able to follow the rules of the Ashram, had never expected that any such would be forthcoming.

With the stopping of monetary help came rumours of proposed social boycott. We were prepared for all this. I had told my companions, that if we were boycotted, and denied the usual facilities, we would not leave Ahmedabad. We would rather go and stay in the untouchables' quarter and live on whatever we could get by manual labour.

Matters came to such a pass that Maganlal Gandhi one day gave me this notice: 'We are out of funds, and there is nothing for the next month.'

I quietly replied: 'Then we shall go to the untouchables' quarter.'

This was not the first time I had been faced with such a trial. On all

such occasions God has sent help at the last moment. One morning, shortly after Maganlal had given me warning of our monetary plight, one of the children came and said that a Sheth was waiting in a car outside, and that he wanted to see me. I went out to him. 'I want to give the Ashram some help. Will you accept it?' he asked.

'Most certainly,' said I. 'And I confess I am at the present moment at the end of my resources.'

'I shall come tomorrow at this time,' he said. 'Will you be here?'

'Yes,' said I, and he left.

Next day, exactly at the appointed hour, the car drew up near our quarters, and the horn was blown. The children came with the news. The Sheth did not come in. I went out to see him. He placed in my hands currency notes of the value of Rs. 13,000, and drove away.

I had never expected this help, and what a novel way of rendering it! The gentleman had never before visited the

Ashram. So far as I can remember I had met him only once. No visit, no enquiries, simply rendering help and going away! This was a unique experience for me. The help deferred the exodus to the untouchables' quarter. We now felt quite safe for a year.

Just as there was a storm outside, so was there a storm in the Ashram itself. Though in South Africa untouchable friends used to come to my place and live and feed with me, my wife and other women did not seem quite to relish the admission into the Ashram of the untouchable friends. My eyes and ears easily detected their indifference, if not their dislike, towards Danibehn. The monetary difficulty had caused me no anxiety, but this internal storm was more than I could bear. Danibehn was an ordinary woman. Dudabhai was a man with slight education but of good understanding. I liked his patience. Sometimes he did flare up, but on the whole I was well impressed with his forbearance.

I pleaded with him to swallow minor insults. He not only agreed but prevailed upon his wife to do likewise.

The admission of this family proved a valuable lesson to the Ashram. In the very beginning we proclaimed to the world that the Ashram would not countenance untouchability. Those who wanted to help the Ashram were thus put on their guard, and the work of the Ashram in this direction was considerably simplified. The fact, that it is mostly the real orthodox Hindus who have met the daily growing expenses of the Ashram, is perhaps a clear indication that untouchability is shaken to its foundation. There are indeed many other proofs of this, but the fact that good Hindus do not scruple to help an Ashram where we go the length of dining with the untouchables is no small proof.

I am sorry that I should have to skip over quite a number of things pertaining to this subject, how we tackled delicate questions arising out of the main question,

how we had to overcome some unexpected difficulties, and various other matters which are quite relevant to a description of experiments with Truth. The chapters that follow will also suffer from the same drawback. I shall have to omit important details, because most of the characters in the drama are still alive, and it is not proper without permission to use their names in connection with events with which they are concerned. It is hardly practicable to obtain their consent or to get them every now and then to revise the chapters concerning themselves. Besides, such procedure is outside the limit of this autobiography. I therefore fear, that the rest of the story, valuable as it is in my opinion to seekers after Truth, will be told with inevitable omissions. Nevertheless, it is my desire and hope, God willing, to bring this narrative down to the days of Non-co-operation.

CHAPTER XI

ABOLITION OF INDENTURED EMIGRATION

WE shall, for a moment, take leave of the Ashram, which, in the very beginning, had to weather internal and external storms, and briefly advert to a matter that engaged my attention.

Indentured labourers were those who had emigrated from India to labour under an indenture for five or less years. Under the Smuts-Gandhi Settlement of 1914, the £3 tax in respect of the indentured emigrants to Natal had been abolished, but the general emigration from India still needed treatment.

In March 1916, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council for the

abolition of the indenture system. In accepting the motion Lord Hardinge announced that he had 'obtained from His Majesty's Government the promise of the abolition in due course' of the system. I felt, however, that India could not be satisfied with so very vague an assurance, but ought to agitate for immediate abolition. India had tolerated the system through sheer negligence, and I believed the time had come when people could successfully agitate for this redress. I met some of the leaders, wrote in the press, and saw that public opinion was solidly in favour of immediate abolition. Might this be a fit subject for Satyagraha? I had no doubt that it was, but I did not know the *modus operandi*.

In the meantime the Viceroy had made no secret of the meaning of 'the eventual abolition' which, as he said, was abolition 'within such reasonable time as will allow of alternative arrangements being introduced.'

So in February 1917, Pandit Malaviyaji asked for leave to introduce a bill for the immediate abolition of the system. Lord Chelmsford refused permission. It was time for me to tour the country for an all-India agitation.

Before I started the agitation I thought it proper to wait upon the Viceroy. So I applied for an interview. He immediately granted it. Mr. Maffey, now Sir John Maffey, was his private secretary. I came in close contact with him. I had a satisfactory talk with Lord Chelmsford, who without being definite promised to be helpful.

I began my tour from Bombay. Mr. Jehangir Petit undertook to convene the meeting under the auspices of the Imperial Citizenship Association. The Executive Committee of the Association met first for framing the resolutions to be moved at the meeting. Dr. Stanley Reed, Sr. (now Sir) Lallubhai Samaldas, Sr. Natarajan and Mr. Petit were present at the Committee meeting. The

discussion centred round the fixing of the period within which the Government was to be asked to abolish the system. There were three proposals, *viz.*, for abolition 'as soon as possible,' abolition 'by the 31st July,' and 'immediate abolition.' I was for a definite date, as we could then decide what to do if the Government failed to accede to our request within the time limit. Sr. Lallubhai was for 'immediate' abolition. He said 'immediate' indicated a shorter period than the 31st July. I explained that the people would not understand the word 'immediate.' If we wanted to get them to do something, they must have a more definite word. Every one would interpret 'immediate' in his own way,—Government one way, the people another way. There was no question of misunderstanding 'the 31st of July,' and if nothing was done by that date we could proceed further. Dr. Reed saw the force of the argument, and ultimately Sr. Lallubhai also agreed. We adopted

the 31st July as the latest date by which the abolition should be announced, a resolution to that effect was passed at the public meeting, and meetings throughout India resolved accordingly.

Mrs. Jaiji Petit put all her energies into the organisation of a ladies' deputation to the Viceroy. Amongst the ladies from Bombay who formed the deputation I remember the names of Lady Tata and the late Dilshad Begam. The deputation had a great effect. The Viceroy gave an encouraging reply.

I visited Karachi, Calcutta and various other places. There were fine meetings everywhere, and there was unbounded enthusiasm. I had not expected anything like it when the agitation was launched.

In those days I used to travel alone, and had therefore wonderful experiences. The C. I. D. men were always after me. But as I had nothing to conceal they did not molest me, nor did I

cause them any trouble. Fortunately I had not then received the stamp of Mahatmaship, though the shout of that name was quite common where people knew me.

On one occasion the detectives disturbed me at several stations, asked for my ticket and took down the number. I, of course, readily replied to all the questions they asked. My fellow passengers had taken me to be a 'sadhu' or a 'fakir.' When they saw that I was being molested at every station, they were exasperated and swore at the detectives. 'Why are you worrying the poor sadhu for nothing?' they protested. 'Don't you show these scoundrels your ticket,' they said, addressing me.

I said to them gently: 'It is no trouble to show them my ticket. They are doing their duty.' The passengers were not satisfied, they evinced more and more sympathy, and strongly objected to this sort of ill-treatment of innocent men.

But the detectives were nothing. The real hardship was the third class travelling. My bitterest experience was from Lahore to Delhi. I was going to Calcutta from Karachi via Lahore where I had to change trains. It was impossible to find a place in the train. It was full, and those who could get in did so by sheer force, often sneaking through windows if the doors were locked. I had to reach Calcutta on the date fixed for the meeting, and if I missed this train I could not arrive in time. I had almost given up hope of getting in. No one was willing to accept me, when a porter discovering my plight came to me and said, 'Give me twelve annas and I'll get you a seat.' 'Yes,' said I, 'you shall have twelve annas if you do procure me a seat.' The young man went from carriage to carriage entreating passengers but no one heeded him. As the train was about to start, some passengers said, 'There is no room here, but you can shove him in if you like. He will have

to stand.' 'Well?' asked the young porter. I readily agreed, and he shoved me in bodily through the window. Thus I got in and the porter earned his twelve annas.

The night was a trial. The other passengers were sitting somehow. I stood two hours, holding the chain of the upper bunk. Meanwhile some of the passengers kept worrying me incessantly. 'Why will you not sit down?' they asked. I tried to reason with them saying there was no room, but they could not tolerate my standing though they were lying full length on the upper bunks. They did not tire of worrying me, neither did I tire of gently replying to them. This at last mollified them. Some of them asked me my name, and when I gave it they felt ashamed. They apologised, and made room for me. Patience was thus rewarded. I was dead tired, and my head was reeling. God sent help just when it was most needed.

In that way I somehow reached Delhi and thence Calcutta. The Maharaja of Cassimbazaar, the president of the Calcutta meeting, was my host. Just as in Karachi, here also there was unbounded enthusiasm. The meeting was attended by several Englishmen.

Before the 31st July the Government announced that indentured emigration from India was stopped.

It was in 1894 that I drafted the first petition protesting against the system, and I had then hoped, that this 'semi-slavery,' as Sir W. W. Hunter used to call the system, would some day be brought to an end.

There were many who aided in the agitation which was started in 1894, but I cannot help saying that potential Satyagraha hastened the end.

For further details of that agitation, and of those who took part in it, I refer the reader to my *Satyagraha in South Africa.*

CHAPTER XII

THE STAIN OF INDIGO

CHAMPARAN is the land of King Janaka. Just as it abounds in mango groves, so used it to be full of indigo plantations until the year 1917. The Champaran tenant was bound, by law, to plant three out of every twenty parts of his land with indigo for his landlord. This system was known as the *tinkathia* system, as three *kathas* out of twenty (which make one acre) had to be planted with indigo.

I must confess, that I did not then know even the name, much less the geographical position, of Champaran, and I had hardly any notion of indigo

plantations. I had seen packets of indigo, but little dreamed that it was grown and manufactured in Champaran at great hardship to thousands of agriculturists.

Rajkumar Shukla was one of the agriculturists who had been under this harrow, and he was filled with a passion to wash away the stain of indigo for the thousands who were suffering as he had suffered.

This man caught hold of me at Lucknow, where I had gone for the Congress of 1916. 'Vakil Babu will tell you everything about our distress,' he said, and urged me to go to Champaran. 'Vakil Babu' was none other than Babu Vrajakishore Prasad who became my esteemed co-worker in Champaran, and who is the soul of public work in Bihar. Rajkumar Shukla brought him to my tent. He was dressed in a black alpaca *achkan* and trousers. Vrajakishore Babu failed then to make an impression on me. I took it that he must be some vakil exploiting the simple agriculturists.

Having heard from him something of Champaran, I replied as was my wont: 'I can give no opinion without seeing the condition with my own eyes. You will please move the resolution in the Congress, but leave me free for the present.' Rajkumar Shukla of course wanted some help from the Congress. Babu Vrajakishore Prasad moved the resolution expressing sympathy for the people of Champaran, and it was unanimously passed.

Rajkumar Shukla was glad, but far from satisfied. He wanted me personally to visit Champaran and witness the miseries of the ryots there. I told him that I would include Champaran in my tour which I had contemplated, and give it a day or two. 'One day will be enough,' said he, 'and you will see things with your own eyes.'

From Lucknow I went to Cawnpore. Rajkumar Shukla followed me there. 'Champaran is very near here. Please give a day,' he insisted. 'Pray excuse

me this time. But I promise that I will come,' said I, further committing myself.

I returned to the Ashram. The ubiquitous Rajkumar was there too. 'Pray fix the day now,' he said. 'Well,' said I, 'I have to be in Calcutta on such and such a date, come and meet me then, and take me from there.' I did not know where I was to go, what to do, what things to see.

Before I reached Bhupen Babu's place in Calcutta, Rajkumar Shukla had gone and established himself there. Thus this ignorant, unsophisticated, but resolute agriculturist captured me.

So early in 1917, we left Calcutta for Champaran, looking just like fellow rustics. I did not even know the train. He took me to it, and we travelled together, reaching Patna in the morning.

This was my first visit to Patna. I had no friend or acquaintance with whom I could think of putting up. I had an idea that Rajkumar Shukla, simple agriculturist as he was, must have some

influence in Patna. I had come to know him a little more on the journey, and on reaching Patna, I had no illusions left concerning him. He was perfectly innocent of everything. The vakils that he had taken to be his friends were really nothing of the sort. Poor Rajkumar was more or less as a menial to them. Between such agriculturist clients and their vakils, there is a gulf as wide as the Ganges in flood.

Rajkumar Shukla took me to Rajendra Babu's place in Patna. Rajendra Babu had gone to Puri or some other place, I now forget which. There were one or two servants at the bungalow who paid us no attention. I had with me something to eat. I wanted dates which my companion procured for me from the bazaar.

There was strict untouchability in Bihar. I might not draw water at the well whilst the servants were using it, lest drops of water from my bucket might pollute them, the servants not knowing

to what caste I belonged. Rajkumar directed me to the indoor latrine, the servant promptly directed me to the outdoor one. All this was far from surprising or irritating me, for I was inured to such things. The servants were doing their duty, and as they thought, doing what Rajendra Babu would wish them to do.

These entertaining experiences enhanced my regard for Rajkumar Shukla, if they also enabled me to know him better. I saw now, that Rajkumar Shukla could not guide me, and that I must take the reins in my own hands.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GENTLE BIHARI

I knew Maulana Mazharul Haq in London when he was studying for the bar, and when I met him at the Bombay Congress in 1915,—the year in which he was President of the Muslim League,—he had renewed the acquaintance, and extended me an invitation to stay with him whenever I happened to go to Patna. I bethought myself of this invitation and sent him a note indicating the purpose of my visit. He immediately came in his car, and pressed me to accept his hospitality. I thanked him, and requested him to guide me to my

destination by the first available train, the railway guide being useless for an utter stranger like me. He had a talk with Rajkumar Shukla and suggested that I should first go to Muzaffarpur. There was a train for that place the same evening, and he sent me off by it.

Principal Kripalani was then in Muzaffarpur. I had known of him ever since my visit to Hyderabad. Dr. Choithram had told me of his great sacrifice, of his simple life, and of the Ashram that Dr. Choithram was running out of funds provided by Prof. Kripalani. He used to be a professor in the Government College, Muzaffarpur, and had just resigned the post when I went there. I had sent a telegram informing him of my arrival, and he met me at the station with a crowd of students, though the train reached there at midnight. He had no rooms of his own, and was staying with Professor Malkani who therefore virtually became my host. It

was an extraordinary thing in those days for a Government professor to harbour a man like me.

Professor Kripalani spoke to me about the desperate condition of Bihar, particularly of the Tirhut division, and gave me an idea of the difficulty of my task. He had established very close contact with the Biharis, and had already spoken to them about the mission that took me to Bihar.

In the morning a small group of vakils called on me. I still remember Ramnavmiprasad among them, as his earnestness specially appealed to me.

'It is not possible,' he said, 'for you to do the kind of work you have come for, if you stay here (meaning Prof. Malkani's quarters). You must come and stay with one of us. Gaya Babu is a well-known vakil here. I have come on his behalf to invite you to stay with him. I confess we are all afraid of Government, but we shall render what help we can. Most of the things Rajkumar Shukla has

told you are true. It is a pity our leaders are not here today. I have however, wired to them both, Babu Vrajakishore Prasad and Babu Rajendra Prasad. I expect them to arrive shortly, and they are sure to be able to give you all the information you want, and to help you considerably. Pray come over to Gaya Babu's place.'

This was a request that I could not resist, though I hesitated for fear of embarrassing Gaya Babu. But he put me at ease, and so I went over to stay with him. He and his people showered all their affection on me.

Vrajakishore Babu now arrived from Darbhanga and Rajendra Babu from Puri. Vrajakishore Babu was not the Babu Vrajakishore Prasad I had met in Lucknow. He impressed me this time with his humility, simplicity, goodness and extraordinary faith, so characteristic of the Biharis, and my heart was joyous over it. The Bihar vakils' regard for him was an agreeable surprise to me.

Soon I felt myself becoming bound to this circle of friends in life-long friendship. Vrajakishore Babu acquainted me with the facts of the case. He used to be in the habit of taking up the cases of the poor tenants. There were two such cases pending when I went there. When he won any such case, he consoled himself that he was doing something for these poor people. Not that he did not charge fees from these simple peasants. Lawyers labour under the belief that if they do not charge fees, they will have no wherewithal to run their households, and will not be able to render effective help to the poor people. The figures of the fees they charged and the standard of a barrister's fees in Bengal and Bihar staggered me.

'We gave Rs. 10,000 to so and so for his opinion,' I was told. Nothing less than four figures in any case.

The friends listened to my kindly reproach and did not misunderstand me.

'Having studied these cases,' said I, 'I have come to the conclusion that we should stop going to law courts. Taking such cases to the courts does little good. Where the ryots are so crushed and fearstricken, law courts are useless. The real relief for them is to be free from fear. We cannot sit still until we have driven *tinkathia* out of Bihar. I had thought that I should be able to leave here in two days, but I now realise that the work might take even two years. I am prepared to give that time, if necessary. I am now feeling my ground, but I want your help.'

I found Vrajakishore Babu exceptionally cool-headed. 'We shall render all the help we can,' he said quietly, 'but pray tell us what kind of help you will need.'

And thus we sat talking until midnight.

'I shall have little use for your legal knowledge,' I said to them. 'I want clerical assistance and help in

interpretation. It may be necessary to face imprisonment, but, much as I would love you to run that risk, you would go only so far as you feel yourselves capable of going. Even turning yourselves into clerks and giving up your profession for an indefinite period is no small thing. I find it difficult to understand the local dialect of Hindi, and I shall not be able to read papers written in Kaithi or Urdu. I shall want you to translate them for me. We cannot afford to pay for this work. It should all be done for love and out of a spirit of service.'

Vrajakishore Babu understood this immediately, and he now cross-examined me and his companions by turns. He tried to ascertain the implications of all that I had said,—how long their service would be required, how many of them would be needed, whether they might serve by turns and so on. Then he asked the vakils the capacity of their sacrifice.

Ultimately they gave me this assurance. 'Such and such a number of us will do whatever you may ask. Some of us will be with you for so much time as you may require. The idea of accommodating oneself to imprisonment is a novel thing for us. We will try to assimilate it.'

CHAPTER XIV

FACE TO FACE WITH AHIMSA

MY object was to inquire into the condition of the Champaran agriculturists and understand their grievances against the indigo planters. For this purpose it was necessary that I should meet thousands of the ryots. But I deemed it essential, before starting on my inquiry, to know the planters' side of the case and see the Commissioner of the Division. I sought and was granted appointments with both.

The Secretary of the Planters' Association told me plainly that I was an outsider and that I had no business to come between the planters and their

tenants, but if I had any representation to make, I might submit it in writing. I politely told him that I did not regard myself as an outsider, and that I had every right to inquire into the condition of the tenants if they desired me to do so.

The Commissioner, on whom I called, proceeded to bully me, and advised me forthwith to leave Tirhut.

I acquainted my co-workers with all this, and told them that there was a likelihood of Government stopping me from proceeding further, and that I might have to go to jail earlier than I had expected, and that if I was to be arrested, it would be best that the arrest should take place in Motihari or if possible in Bettiah. It was advisable, therefore, that I should go to those places as early as possible.

Champaran is a district of the Tirhut division and Motihari is its headquarters. Rajkumar Shukla's place was in the vicinity of Bettiah, and the tenants

belonging to the *kothis* in its neighbourhood were the poorest in the district. Rajkumar Shukla wanted me to see them and I was equally anxious to do so.

So I started with my co-workers for Motihari the same day. Babu Gorakh Prasad harboured us in his home which became a caravanserai. It could hardly contain us all. The very same day we heard, that about five miles from Motihari a tenant had been ill-treated. It was decided, that in company with Babu Dharanidhar Prasad, I should go and see him the next morning, and we accordingly set off for the place on elephant's back. An elephant, by the way, is about as common in Champaran as a bullock-cart in Gujarat. We had scarcely gone half way when a messenger from the Police Superintendent overtook us and said that the latter had sent his compliments. I saw what he meant. Having left Dharanidharbabu to proceed to the original

destination, I got into the hired carriage which the messenger had brought. He then served on me a notice to leave Champaran, and drove me to my place. On his asking me to acknowledge the service of the notice, I wrote to the effect that I did not propose to comply with it, and leave Champaran till my inquiry was finished. Thereupon I received a summons to take my trial the next day for disobeying the order to leave Champaran.

I kept awake that whole night writing letters and giving necessary instructions to Babu Vrajakishore Prasad.

The news of the notice and the summons spread like wildfire, and I was told that Motihari that day witnessed unprecedented scenes. Gorakhbabu's house and the court house overflowed with men. Fortunately I had finished all my work during the night and so was able to cope with the crowds. My companions proved the greatest help. They occupied themselves with regulating

the crowds, for the latter followed me wherever I went.

A sort of friendliness sprang up between the officials — Collector, Magistrate, Police Superintendent — and myself. I might have legally resisted the notices served on me. Instead I accepted them all, and my conduct towards the officials was correct. They thus saw that I did not want to offend them personally, but that I wanted to offer civil resistance to their orders. In this way they were put at ease, and instead of harassing me they gladly availed themselves of my and my co-workers' co-operation in regulating the crowds. But it was an ocular demonstration to them of the fact that their authority was shaken. The people had for the moment lost all fear of punishment, and yielded obedience to the power of love which their new friend exercised.

It should be remembered that no one knew me in Champaran. The peasants were all ignorant. Champaran, being far

up north of the Ganges, and right at the foot of the Himalayas in close proximity to Nepal, was cut off from the rest of India. The Congress was practically unknown in those parts. Even those who had heard the name of the Congress shrank from joining it or even mentioning it. And now the Congress and its members had entered this land, though not in the name of the Congress, yet in a far more real sense.

In consultation with my co-workers I had decided that nothing should be done in the name of the Congress. What we wanted was work and not name, substance and not shadow. For the name of the Congress was the *bete noire* of the Government and their controllers — the planters. To them the Congress was a byword for lawyers' wrangles, evasion of law through legal loopholes, a byword for bomb and anarchical crime and for diplomacy and hypocrisy. We had to disillusion them both. Therefore we had decided not to mention the name

of the Congress, and not to acquaint the peasants with the organisation called the Congress. It was enough, we had thought, if they understood and followed the spirit of the Congress, instead of its letter.

No emissaries had therefore been sent there, openly or secretly, on behalf of the Congress to prepare the ground for our arrival. Rajkumar Shukla was incapable of reaching the thousands of peasants. No political work had yet been done amongst them. The world outside Champaran was not known to them. And yet they received me as though we had been age-long friends. It is no exaggeration, but the literal truth, to say that in this meeting with the peasants I was face to face with God, Ahimsa and Truth.

When I come to examine my title to this realisation, I find nothing but my love for the people. And this in turn is nothing but an expression of my unshakeable faith in Ahimsa.

That day in Champaran was an unforgettable event in my life, and a red-letter day for the peasants and for me.

According to the law I was to be on my trial, but truly speaking Government was to be on its trial. The Commissioner only succeeded in trapping Government in the net which he had spread for me.

CHAPTER XV

CASE WITHDRAWN

THE trial began. The Government pleader, the Magistrate and other officials were on tenterhooks. They were at a loss to know what to do. The Government pleader was pressing the Magistrate to postpone the case. But I interfered and requested the Magistrate not to postpone the case, as I wanted to plead guilty to having disobeyed the order to leave Champaran, and read a brief statement as follows:

> 'With the permission of the Court I would like to make a brief statement showing why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order passed under Sec. 144 of Cr. P. C. In my humble opinion

it is a question of difference of opinion between the Local Administration and myself. I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation to come and help the ryots, who urge they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not render any help without studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the Administration and the planters. I have no other motive, and cannot believe that my coming can in any way disturb public peace and cause loss of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The Administration, however, have thought differently. I fully appreciate their difficulty, and I admit too that they can only proceed upon information they received. As a law-abiding citizen my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst. I could not, therefore, voluntarily retire. Amid this conflict of duties I could only throw the responsibility of removing

me from them on the Administration. I am fully conscious of the fact, that a person, holding, in the public life of India, a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting an example. It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience.

'I venture to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me, but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience.'

There was now no occasion to postpone the hearing, but as both the Magistrate and the Government pleader had been taken by surprise, the Magistrate postponed judgment. Meanwhile I had wired full details to the Viceroy, to Patna friends, as also to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and others.

Before I could appear before the Court to receive the sentence, the Magistrate sent a written message that the Lieutenant Governor had ordered the case against me to be withdrawn, and the Collector wrote to me saying, that I was at liberty to conduct the proposed inquiry, and that I might count on whatever help I needed from the officials. None of us was prepared for this prompt and happy issue.

I called on the Collector Mr. Heycock. He seemed to be a good man anxious to do justice. He told me that I might ask for whatever papers I desired to see, and that I was at liberty to see him whenever I liked.

The country thus had its first direct object lesson in Civil Disobedience. The affair was freely discussed both locally and in the press, and my inquiry got unexpected publicity.

It was necessary for my inquiry that the Government should remain neutral. But the inquiry did not need support

from press reporters or leading articles in the press. Indeed the situation in Champaran was so delicate and difficult that over-energetic criticism or highly coloured reports might easily damage the cause which I was seeking to espouse. So I wrote to the editors of the principal papers requesting them not to trouble to send any reporters, as I should send them whatever might be necessary for publication and keep them informed.

I knew that the Government attitude countenancing my presence had displeased the Champaran planters, and I knew that even the officials, though they could say nothing openly, could hardly have liked it. Incorrect or misleading reports therefore were likely to incense them all the more, and their ire, instead of descending on me, would be sure to descend on the poor fear-stricken ryots, and seriously hinder my search for the truth about the case.

In spite of these precautions, the planters engineered against me a

poisonous agitation. All sorts of falsehoods appeared in the press about my co-workers and myself. But my extreme cautiousness and my insistence on truth, even to the minutest detail, turned the edge of their sword.

The planters left no stone unturned in maligning Vrajakishorebabu, but the more they maligned him, the more he rose in the estimation of the people.

In such a delicate situation as this, I did not think it proper to invite any leaders from other provinces. Pandit Malaviyaji had sent me an assurance that whenever I wanted him, I had only to send him word, but I did not trouble him. I thus prevented the struggle from assuming a political aspect. But I sent to the leaders and the principal papers occasional reports not for publication but merely for their information. I had seen that even where the end might be political, but where the cause was non-political, one damaged it by giving it a political aspect, and helped

it by keeping it within its non-political limit. The Champaran struggle was a proof of the fact that disinterested service of the people in any sphere ultimately helps the country politically.

CHAPTER XVI

METHODS OF WORK

TO give a full account of the Champaran inquiry would be to narrate the history, for the period, of the Champaran ryot, which is out of the question in these chapters. The Champaran inquiry was a bold experiment with Truth and Ahimsa, and I am giving week by week only what occurs to me as worth giving from that point of view. For more details the reader must turn to Sjt. Rajendra Prasad's history of the Champaran Satyagraha in Hindi, an English edition[1] of which I am told is now in the press.

1 The English edition has since been published by S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras.

But to return to the subject matter of this chapter. The inquiry could not be conducted in Gorakhbabu's house, without practically asking poor Gorakhbabu to vacate it. And the people of Motihari had not yet shed their fear to the extent of renting a house to us. However Vrajakishorebabu tactfully secured one with considerable open space about it, and we now removed there.

It was not quite possible to carry on the work without money. It had not been the practice hitherto to appeal to the public for money for work of this kind. Vrajakishorebabu and his friends were mainly vakils who either contributed funds themselves, or found it from friends whenever there was an occasion. How could they ask the people to pay when they and their kind could well afford to do so? That seemed to be the argument. I had made up my mind not to accept anything from the Champaran ryots. It would be bound to be misinterpreted. I was equally determined

not to appeal to the country at large for funds to conduct this inquiry. For that was likely to give it an all-India and political aspect. Friends from Bombay offered Rs. 15,000, but I declined the offer with thanks. I decided to get as much as was possible, with Vrajakishore-babu's help, from well-to-do Biharis living outside Champaran, and if more was needed, to approach my friend Dr. P. J. Mehta of Rangoon. Dr. Mehta readily agreed to send me whatever might be needed. We were thus free from all anxiety on this score. We were not likely to require large funds, as we were bent on exercising the greatest economy in consonance with the poverty of Champaran. Indeed it was found in the end that we did not need any large amount. I have an impression that we expended in all not more than three thousand rupees, and as far as I remember we saved a few hundred rupees from what we had collected.

The curious ways of living of my companions in the early days were a constant theme of raillery at their expense. Each of the vakils had a servant and a cook, and therefore a separate kitchen, and they often had their dinner as late as midnight. Though they paid their own expenses, their irregularity worried me, but as we had become close friends there was no possibility of a misunderstanding between us, and they received my ridicule in good part. Ultimately it was agreed that the servants should be dispensed with, that all the kitchens should be amalgamated, and that regular hours should be observed. As all were not vegetarians, and as two kitchens would have been expensive, a common vegetarian kitchen was decided upon. It was also felt necessary to insist on simple meals.

These arrangements considerably reduced the expenses and saved us a lot of time and energy, and both these

were badly needed. Crowds of peasants came to make their statements, and they were followed by an army of companions who filled the compound and garden to overflowing. The efforts of my companions to save me from *darshan*-seekers were often of no avail, and I had to be exhibited for *darshan* at particular hours. At least five to seven volunteers were required to take down statements, and even then some people had to go away in the evening without being able to make their statements. All these statements were not essential, many of them being repetitions, but the people could not be satisfied otherwise, and I appreciated their feelings in the matter.

Those who took down the statements had to observe certain rules. Each peasant had to be closely cross-examined, and whoever failed to satisfy the test was rejected. This entailed a lot of extra time, but most of the statements were thus rendered incontrovertible.

An officer from the C. I. D. would always be present when these statements were recorded. We might have prevented him, but we had decided from the very beginning not only not to mind the presence of C. I. D. officers, but to treat them with courtesy and to give them all the information that it was possible to give them. This was far from doing us any harm. On the contrary the very fact that the statements were taken down in the presence of the C. I. D. officers made the peasants more fearless. Whilst on the one hand excessive fear of the C. I. D. was driven out of the peasants' minds, on the other, their presence exercised a natural restraint on exaggeration. It was the business of C. I. D. friends to entrap people, and so the peasants had necessarily to be cautious.

As I did not want to irritate the planters, but to win them over by gentleness, I made a point of writing to and meeting such of them against

whom allegations of a serious nature were made. I met the Planters' Association as well, placed the ryots' grievances before them and acquainted myself with their point of view. Some of the planters hated me, some were indifferent, whilst a few treated me with courtesy.

CHAPTER XVII

COMPANIONS

VRAJAKISHOREBABU and Rajendrababu were a matchless pair. Their devotion made it impossible for me to take a single step without their help. Their disciples, or their companions — Shambhubabu, Anugrahababu, Dharanibabu, Ramnavmibabu and other vakils — were always with us. Vindhyababu and Janakdharibabu also came and helped us now and then. All these were Biharis. Their principal work was to take down the ryots' statements.

Professor Kripalani could not but cast in his lot with us. Though a Sindhi he was more Bihari than a born Bihari.

I have seen a few workers capable of merging themselves in the province of their adoption. Kripalani is one of those few. He made it impossible for any one to feel that he belonged to a different province. He was my gatekeeper in chief. For the time being he made it the end and aim of his life to save me from *darshan*-seekers. He warded off people, calling to his aid now his unfailing humour, now his non-violent threats. At nightfall he would take up his occupation of a teacher, and regale his companions with his historical studies and observations, and quicken any timid visitor into bravery.

Maulana Mazharul Haq had registered his name on the standing list of helpers whom I might count upon whenever necessary, and he made a point of looking in once or twice a month. The pomp and splendour in which he then lived was a sharp contrast to his simple life of today. The way in which he associated with us made us feel that

he was one of us, though his fashionable habit gave a stranger a different impression.

As I gained more experience of Bihar, I became convinced that work of a permanent nature was impossible without proper village education. The ryots' ignorance was pathetic. They either allowed their children to roam about, or made them toil on indigo plantations from morning to night for a couple of coppers a day. In those days a male labourer's wage did not exceed ten pice, a female's did not exceed six and a child's three. He who succeeded in earning four annas a day was considered most fortunate.

In consultation with my companions I decided to open primary schools in six villages. One of our conditions with the villagers was that they should provide the teachers with board and lodging while we would see to the other expenses. The village folk had hardly any cash in their hands, but they could

well afford to provide foodstuffs. Indeed they had already expressed their readiness to contribute grain and other raw materials.

From where to get the teachers was a great problem. It was difficult to find local teachers who would work for a bare allowance or without remuneration. My idea was never to entrust children to commonplace teachers. Their literary qualification was not so essential as their moral fibre.

So I issued a public appeal for voluntary teachers. It received a ready response. Sjt. Gangadharrao Deshpande sent Babasaheb Soman and Pundarik. Mrs. Avantikabai Gokhale came from Bombay and Mrs. Anandibai Vaishampayan from Poona. I sent to the Ashram for Chhotalal, Surendranath and my son Devdas. About this time Mahadev Desai and Narahari Parikh with their wives cast in their lot with me. Kasturbai was also summoned for the work. This was a fairly strong contingent.

Shrimati Avantikabai and Shrimati Anandibai were educated enough, but Mrs. Durga Desai and Mrs. Manibehn Parikh had nothing more than a bare knowledge of Gujarati, and Kasturbai not even that. How were these ladies to instruct the children in Hindi?

I explained to them, that they were expected to teach the children not grammar and the three R's so much as cleanliness and good manners. I further explained, that even as regards letters there was not so great a difference between Gujarati, Hindi and Marathi as they imagined, and in the primary classes, at any rate, the teaching of the rudiments of the alphabet and numerals was not a difficult matter. The result was that the classes taken by these ladies were found to be most successful. The experience inspired them with confidence and interest in their work. Avantikabai's became a model school. She threw herself heart and soul into her work. She brought her exceptional

gifts to bear on it. Through these ladies we could, to some extent, reach the village women.

But I did not want to stop at providing for primary education. The villages were insanitary, the lanes full of filth, the wells surrounded by mud and stink and the courtyards unbearably untidy. The elder people badly needed education in cleanliness. They were all suffering from various skin diseases. So it was decided to do as much sanitary work as possible and to penetrate every department of their lives.

Doctors were needed for this work. I requested the Servants of India Society to lend us the services of the late Dr. Dev. We had been great friends and he readily offered his services for six months. The teachers — men and women — had all to work under him.

All of them had express instructions not to concern themselves with grievances against planters or with politics. People who had any complaints to make were to

be referred to me. No one was to venture out of his beat. The friends carried out these instructions with wonderful fidelity. I do not remember a single occasion of indiscipline.

CHAPTER XVIII

PENETRATING THE VILLAGES

AS far as was possible we placed each school in charge of one man and one woman. These volunteers had to look after medical relief and sanitation. The womenfolk had to be approached through women.

Medical relief was a very simple affair. Castor oil, quinine and sulphur ointment were the only drugs provided to the volunteers. If the patient showed a furred tongue or complained of constipation, castor oil was administered, in case of fever quinine was given after an opening dose of castor oil, and the sulphur ointment was applied in case of

boils and itches after thoroughly washing the affected parts. No patient was permitted to take home any medicine. Wherever there was some complication Dr. Dev was consulted. Dr. Dev used to visit each centre on certain fixed days in the week.

Quite a number of people availed themselves of this simple relief. This plan of work will not seem strange when it is remembered that the prevailing ailments were few and amenable to simple treatment, by no means requiring expert help. As for the people the arrangement answered excellently.

Sanitation was a difficult affair. The people were not prepared to do anything themselves. Even the field labourers were not ready to do their own scavenging. But Dr. Dev was not a man easily to lose heart. He and the volunteers concentrated their energies on making a village ideally clean. They swept the roads and the courtyards, cleaned out the wells, filled up the pools

near by, and lovingly persuaded the villagers to raise volunteers from amongst themselves. In some villages they shamed people into taking up the work, and in others the people were so enthusiastic that they even prepared roads to enable my car to go from place to place. These sweet experiences were not unmixed with bitter ones of people's apathy. I remember some villagers having frankly expressed their dislike for this work.

It may not be out of place here to narrate an experience that I have described before now in many meetings. Bhitiharva was a small village in which was one of our schools. I happened to visit a smaller village in its vicinity and found some of the women dressed very dirtily. So I told Mrs. Gandhi to ask them why they did not wash their clothes. She spoke to them. One of the women took her into her hut and said: 'Look now, there is no box or cupboard here containing other clothes. The *sari* I am

wearing is the only one I have. How am I to wash it? Tell Mahatmaji to get me another *sari,* and I shall then promise to bathe and put on clean clothes every day.'

This cottage was not an exception, but a type to be found in many Indian villages. In countless cottages in India people live without any furniture, and without a change of clothes, merely with a rag to cover their shame.

One more experience I will note. In Champaran there is no lack of bamboo and grass. The school hut they had put up at Bhitiharva was made of these materials. Some one — possibly some of the neighbouring planters' men — set fire to it one night. It was not thought advisable to build another hut of bamboo and grass. The school was in charge of Sjt. Soman and Mrs. Gandhi. Sjt. Soman decided to build a *pucka* house, and thanks to his infectious labour, many cooperated with him, and so a brick house was soon made ready. There was

no fear now of this building being burnt down.

Thus the volunteers with their schools, sanitation work and medical relief gained the confidence and respect of the village folk, and were able to bring good influence to bear upon them.

But I must confess with regret, that my hope of putting this constructive work on a permanent footing was not fulfilled. The volunteers had come for temporary periods, I could not secure any more from outside, and permanent honorary workers from Bihar were not available. As soon as my work in Champaran was finished, work outside, which had been preparing in the meantime, drew me away. The few months' work in Champaran, however, took such deep root that its influence in one form or another is to be observed there even today.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN A GOVERNOR IS GOOD

WHILST on the one hand social service work, of the kind I have described in the foregoing chapters, was being carried out, on the other the work of recording statements of the ryots' grievances was progressing apace. Thousands of such statements were taken and they could not but have their effect. The ever growing number of ryots coming to make their statements increased the planters' wrath, and they moved heaven and earth to counteract my inquiry.

One day I received a letter from the Bihar Government to the following

effect: 'Your inquiry has been sufficiently prolonged, and should you not now bring it to an end and leave Bihar?' The letter was couched in polite language but its meaning was obvious.

I wrote in reply that the inquiry was bound to be prolonged, and unless and until it resulted in bringing relief to the people, I had no intention of leaving Bihar. I pointed out that it was open to Government to terminate my inquiry by accepting the ryots' grievances as genuine and redressing them, or by recognising that the ryots had made out a *prima facie* case for an official inquiry which should be immediately instituted.

Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant Governor, asked me to see him, expressed his willingness to appoint an inquiry and invited me to be a member of the Committee. I ascertained the names of the other members, and after consultation with my co-workers agreed to serve on the Committee, on condition

that I should be free to confer with my co-workers during the progress of the inquiry, that Government should recognise, that by being a member of the Committee, I did not cease to be the ryots' advocate, and that in case the result of the inquiry failed to give me satisfaction, I should be free to guide and advise the ryots as to what line of action they should take.

Sir Edward Gait accepted the condition as just and proper, and announced the inquiry. The late Sir Frank Sly was appointed Chairman of the Committee.

The Committee found in favour of the ryots, and recommended that the planters should refund a portion of the exactions made by the planters which the Committee had found to be unlawful, and that the *tinkathia* system should be abolished by law.

Sir Edward Gait had a large share in getting the Committee to make an unanimous report and in getting the

agrarian bill passed in accordance with the Committee's recommendations. Had he not adopted a firm attitude, and had he not brought all his tact to bear on the subject, the report would not have been unanimous, and the Agrarian Act would not have been passed. The planters wielded extraordinary power. They offered strenuous opposition to the bill in spite of the report, but Sir Edward Gait remained firm up to the last and fully carried out the recommendations of the Committee.

The *tinkathia* system which had been in existence for about a century was thus abolished, and with it the planters' *raj* came to an end. The ryots who had all along remained crushed now somewhat came to their own, and the superstition that the stain of indigo could never be washed out was exploded.

It was my desire to continue the constructive work for some years, to establish more schools and to penetrate the villages more effectively. The ground

had been prepared, but it did not please God, as often before, to allow my plans to be fulfilled. Fate had decided otherwise and drove me to take up work elsewhere.

CHAPTER XX

IN TOUCH WITH LABOUR

WHILST I was yet winding up my work on the Committee, I received a letter from Sjts. Mohanlal Pandya and Shankarlal Parikh telling me of the failure of crops in the Kheda district, and asking me to guide the peasants who were unable to pay the assessment. I had not the inclination, the ability or courage to advise without an inquiry on the spot.

At the same time, there came a letter from Shrimati Anasuyabai about the condition of labour in Ahmedabad. Wages were low, the labourers had long been agitating for an increment, and

I had a desire to guide them if I could. But I had not the confidence to direct even this comparatively small affair from that long distance. So I seized the first opportunity to go to Ahmedabad. I had hoped that I should be able to finish both these matters quickly and get back to Champaran to supervise the constructive work that had been inaugurated there.

But things did not move as swiftly as I had wished, and I was unable to return to Champaran, with the result that the schools closed down one by one. My co-workers and I had built many castles in the air, but they all vanished for the time being.

One of these was cow protection work in Champaran, besides rural sanitation and education. I had seen, in the course of my travels, that cow protection and Hindi propaganda had become the exclusive concern of the Marwadis. A Marwadi friend had sheltered me in his *dharmashala* whilst at Bettiah. Other

Marwadis of the place had interested me in their *goshala* (dairy). My ideas about cow protection had been definitely formed then, and my conception of the work was the same as it is today. Cow protection, in my opinion, included cattle-breeding, improvement of the stock, humane treatment of bullocks, formation of model dairies, etc. The Marwadi friends had promised full cooperation in this work, but as I could not fix myself up in Champaran, the scheme could not be carried out.

The *goshala* in Bettiah is still there but it has not become a model dairy, the Champaran bullock is still made to work beyond his capacity, and the so-called Hindu still cruelly belabours the poor animal, and disgraces his religion.

That this work should have remained unrealised has been, for me, a continual regret, and whenever I go to Champaran, and hear the gentle reproaches of the Marwadi and Bihari friends, I recall with

a heavy sigh all those plans which I had to drop so abruptly.

The educational work in one way or another is going on in many places. But the cow protection work had not taken firm root and so it has not progressed in the direction intended.

Whilst the Kheda peasants' question was still being discussed, I had already taken up the question of the mill-hands in Ahmedabad.

I was in a most delicate situation. The mill-hands' case was strong. Shrimati Anasuyabai had to battle against her own brother, Sjt. Ambalal Sarabhai, who led the fray on behalf of the mill-owners. My relations with them were friendly, and that made fighting with them the more difficult. I held consultations with them, and requested them to refer the dispute to arbitration, but they refused to recognise the principle of arbitration.

I had therefore to advise the labourers to go on strike. Before I did so, I came

in very close contact with them and their leaders, and explained to them the conditions of a successful strike:

1. Never to resort to violence,
2. Never to molest blacklegs,
3. Never to depend upon alms, and
4. To remain firm, no matter how long the strike continued, and to earn bread, during the strike, by any other honest labour.

The leaders of the strike understood and accepted the conditions, and the labourers pledged themselves at a general meeting not to resume work until either their terms were accepted or the mill-owners agreed to refer the dispute to arbitration.

It was during this strike that I came to know intimately Sjts. Vallabhbhai Patel and Shankarlal Banker. Shrimati Anasuyabai I knew well before this.

We had daily meetings of the strikers under the shade of a tree on the bank of the Sabarmati. They attended the meeting in their thousands, and I reminded them

in my speeches of their pledge and of the duty to maintain peace and self-respect. They daily paraded the streets of the city in peaceful procession, carrying their banner bearing the inscription '*Ek Tek*' (keep the pledge).

The strike went on for twenty one days. During the continuance of the strike I consulted the mill-owners from time to time, and entreated them to do justice by the labourers. 'We have our pledge too,' they used to say. 'Our relations with the labourers are those of parents and children. . . . How can we brook the interference of a third party? Where is the room for arbitration?'

CHAPTER XXI

A PEEP INTO THE ASHRAM

BEFORE I proceed to describe the progress of the labour dispute it is essential to have a peep into the Ashram. All the while I was in Champaran the Ashram was never out of my mind, and sometimes I used to pay it flying visits.

At that time the Ashram was in Kochrab, a small village near Ahmedabad. Plague broke out in this village, and I saw evident danger to the safety of the Ashram children. It was impossible to keep ourselves immune from the effects of the surrounding insanitation, however scrupulously we might observe the rules of cleanliness within the Ashram walls.

We were not then equal either to getting the Kochrab people to observe these rules or to serving the village otherwise.

Our ideal was to have the Ashram at a safe distance both from town and village, and yet at a manageable distance from either. And we were determined, some day, to settle on ground of our own.

The plague, I felt, was sufficient notice to quit Kochrab. Sjt. Punjabhai Hirachand, a merchant in Ahmedabad, had come in close contact with the Ashram, and used to serve us in a number of matters with a pure and selfless spirit. He had a wide experience of things in Ahmedabad, and he volunteered to procure us suitable land. I went about with him north and south of Kochrab in search of land, and then suggested to him to find out a piece of land three or four miles to the north. He hit upon the present site. Its vicinity to the Sabarmati Central Jail was for me a special attraction. As jail-going

was understood to be the normal lot of Satyagrahis, I liked this position. And I knew that the sites selected for jails have generally clean surroundings.

In about eight days the sale was executed. There was no building on the land and no tree. But its situation on the bank of the river and its solitude were great advantages.

We decided to start by living under canvas, and having a tin shed for a kitchen, till permanent houses were built.

The Ashram had been slowly growing. We were now over forty souls, men, women and children, having our meals at a common kitchen. The whole conception about the removal was mine, the execution was as usual left to Maganlal.

Our difficulties, before we had permanent living accommodation, were great. The rains were impending, and the provisions had to be got from the city four miles away. The ground which had been a waste was infested

with snakes, and it was no small risk to live with little children under such conditions. The general rule was not to kill the snakes, though I confess none of us had shed the fear of these reptiles, nor have we even now.

The rule of not killing venomous reptiles has been practised for the most part at Phœnix, Tolstoy Farm and Sabarmati. At each of these places we had to settle on waste lands. We have had however no loss of life occasioned by snakebite. I see, with the eye of faith, in this circumstance the hand of the God of Mercy. Let no one cavil at this, saying that God can never be partial, and that He has no time to meddle with the humdrum affairs of men. I have no other language to express the fact of the matter, to describe this uniform experience of mine. Human language can but imperfectly describe God's ways. I am sensible of the fact that they are indescribable and inscrutable. But if mortal man will dare to

describe them, he has no better medium than his own inarticulate speech. Even if it be a superstition to believe that complete immunity from harm for twenty five years, in spite of a fairly regular practice of non-killing, is not a fortuitous accident but a grace of God, I should still hug that superstition.

During the strike of the mill-hands in Ahmedabad the foundation of the Ashram weaving shed was being laid. For the principal activity of the Ashram was then weaving. Spinning had not so far been possible for us.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FAST

FOR the first two weeks the mill-hands exhibited great courage and self-restraint, and daily held monster meetings. On these occasions I used to remind them of their pledge, and they would shout back to me the assurance, that they would rather die than break their word.

But at last they began to show signs of flagging. Just as physical weakness in men manifests itself in irascibility, their attitude towards the blacklegs became more and more menacing as the strike seemed to weaken, and I began to fear an outbreak of

rowdyism on their part. The attendance at their daily meetings also began to dwindle by degrees, and despondency and despair were writ large on the faces of those who did attend. Finally the information was brought to me that the strikers had begun to totter. I felt deeply troubled, and set to thinking furiously as to what my duty was in the circumstances. I had had experience of a gigantic strike in South Africa, but the situation that confronted me here was different. The mill-hands had taken the pledge at my suggestion. They had repeated it before me day after day, and the very idea that they might now go back upon it was to me inconceivable. Was it pride or was it my love for the labourers and my passionate regard for truth that was at the back of this feeling, — who can say?

One morning, — it was at a mill-hands' meeting,— while I was still groping and unable to see my way clearly, the light came to me. Unbidden

and all by themselves the words came to my lips: 'Unless the strikers rally,' I declared to the meeting, 'and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether, I will not touch any food.'

The labourers were thunderstruck. Tears began to course down Anasuya-behn's cheeks. The labourers broke out, 'Not you but we shall fast. It would be monstrous if you were to fast. Please forgive us for our lapse, we will now remain faithful to our pledge to the end.'

'There is no need for you to fast,' I replied. 'It would be enough if you could remain true to your pledge. As you know we are without funds, and we do not want to continue our strike by living on public charity. You should therefore try to eke out a bare existence by some kind of labour, so that you may be able to remain unconcerned, no matter how long the strike may continue. As for my fast, it will be broken only after the strike is settled.'

In the meantime Vallabhbhai was trying to find some employment for the strikers under the Municipality, but there was not much hope of success there. Maganlal Gandhi suggested, that as we needed sand for filling the foundation of our weaving school in the Ashram a number of them might be employed for that purpose. The labourers welcomed the proposal. Anasuyabehn led the way with a basket on her head, and soon an endless stream of labourers carrying baskets of sand on their heads could be seen issuing out of the hollow of the river-bed. It was a sight worth seeing. The labourers felt themselves infused with a new strength, and it became difficult to cope with the task of paying out wages to them.

My fast was not free from a grave defect. For, as I have already mentioned in a previous chapter, I enjoyed very close and cordial relations with the mill-owners, and my fast could not but affect their decision. As a Satyagrahi

I knew that I might not fast against them, but ought to leave them free to be influenced by the mill-hands' strike alone. My fast was not undertaken on account of any lapse of the mill-owners, but that of the labourers in which, as their representative, I felt I had a share. With the mill-owners, I could only plead; to fast against them would amount to coercion. Yet in spite of my knowledge that my fast was bound to, as in fact it did, put pressure upon them, I felt I could not help it. The duty to undertake it seemed to me to be clear.

I tried to set the mill-owners at ease. 'There is not the slightest necessity for you to withdraw from your position,' I said to them. But they received my words coldly, and even flung keen, delicate bits of sarcasm at me, as indeed they had a perfect right to do.

The principal man at the back of the mill-owners' unbending attitude towards the strike was Sheth Ambalal. His resolute will and transparent sincerity

were wonderful, and captured my heart. It was a pleasure to be pitched against him. The strain produced by my fast upon the opposition, of which he was the head, cut me, therefore, to the quick. And then, Saraladevi, his wife, was attached to me with the affection of a blood-sister, and I could not bear to see her anguish on account of my action.

Anasuyabehn and a number of other friends and labourers shared the fast with me on the first day. But after some difficulty I was able to dissuade them from continuing it further.

The net result of it was that an atmosphere of good-will was created all round. The hearts of the mill-owners were touched, and they set about discovering some means for a settlement. Ansuyabehn's house became the venue of their discussions. Sjt. Anandshankar Dhruva intervened, and was in the end appointed as arbitrator, and the strike was called off after I had fasted only for three days. The mill-owners

commemorated the event by distributing sweets among the labourers, and thus a settlement was reached after 21 days' strike.

At the meeting held to celebrate the settlement, both the mill-owners and the Commissioner were present. The advice which the latter gave to the mill-hands on this occasion was: 'You should always act as Mr. Gandhi advises you.' Almost immediately after these events I had to engage in a tussle with this very gentleman. But circumstances were changed, and he had changed with the circumstances. He then set about warning the Patidars of Kheda against following my advice!

I must not close this chapter without noting here an incident, as amusing as it was pathetic. It happened in connection with the distribution of sweets. The mill-owners had ordered a very large quantity, and it was a problem how to distribute it among the thousands of labourers. It was decided, that it would be the fittest thing to distribute

it in the open, beneath the very tree under which the pledge had been taken, especially as it would have been extremely inconvenient to assemble them all together in any other place.

I had taken it for granted, that the men who had observed strict discipline for full 21 days would without any difficulty be able to remain standing in an orderly manner, while the sweets were being distributed, and not made an impatient scramble for them. But when it came to the test, all the methods that were tried for making the distribution failed. Again and again their ranks would break into confusion after distribution had proceeded for a couple of minutes. The leaders of the mill-hands tried their best to restore order but in vain. The confusion, the crush and the scramble at last became so great, that quite an amount of the sweets was spoiled by being trampled under foot, and the attempt to distribute them in the open had finally to be given up. With

difficulty we succeeded in taking away the remaining sweets to Sheth Ambalal's bungalow in Mirzapur. Sweets were distributed comfortably the next day within the compound of that bungalow.

The comic side of this incident is obvious but the pathetic side bears mention. Subsequent inquiry revealed the fact, that the beggar population of Ahmedabad, having got scent of the sweets that were to be distributed under the *Ek-Tek* tree, had gone there in large numbers, and it was their hungry scramble for the sweets that had created all the confusion and disorder.

The grinding poverty and starvation with which our country is afflicted is such, that it drives more and more men every year into the ranks of the beggars, whose desperate struggle for bread renders them insensible to all feelings of decency and self-respect. And our philanthropists, instead of providing work for them, and insisting on their working for bread, give them alms.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE KHEDA SATYAGRAHA

NO breathing time was, however, in store for me. Hardly was the Ahmedabad mill-hands' strike over, when I had to plunge into the Kheda Satyagraha struggle.

A condition approaching famine had arisen in the Kheda district owing to a widespread failure of crops, and the Patidars of Kheda were considering the question of getting the revenue assessment for the year suspended.

Sjt. Amritlal Thakkar had already inquired into and reported on the situation, and had personally discussed the question with the Commissioner,

before I gave any definite advice to the cultivators. Sjts. Mohanlal Pandya and Shankarlal Parikh had also thrown themselves into the fight, and had set up an agitation in the Bombay Legislative Council through Sjt. Vithalbhai Patel and the late Sir Gokuldas Kahandas Parekh. More than one deputation had waited upon the Governor in that connection.

I was at this time President of the Gujarat Sabha. The Sabha sent petitions and telegrams to the Government, and even patiently swallowed the insults and threats of the Commissioner. The conduct of the officials on this occasion was so ridiculous and undignified as now to appear almost incredible.

The cultivators' demand was as clear as daylight, and so moderate as to make out a strong case for its acceptance. Under the Land Revenve Rules, if the crop was four annas or under, the cultivators could claim a full suspension of the revenue assessment for the year. According to the official figures the crop

was said to be over four annas. The contention of the cultivalors, on the other hand, was that it was less than four annas. But the Government was in no mood to listen, and regarded the popular demand for arbitration as *lese majeste.* At last all petitioning and prayer having failed, after taking counsel with co-workers, I advised the Patidars to resort to Satyagraha.

Besides the volunteers of Kheda, my principal comrades in this struggle were Sjts. Vallabhbhai Patel, Shankarlal Banker, Shrimati Anasuyabehn, Sjts. Indulal Yajnik, Mahadev Desai and others. Sjt. Vallabhbhai in joining the struggle had to suspend a splendid and growing practice at the bar, which for all practical purposes he was never able to resume.

We fixed up our headquarters at the Nadiad Anathashram, no other place being available which would have been large enough to accommodate all of us.

The following pledge was signed by the Satyagrahis:

'Knowing that the crops of our villages are less than four annas, we requested the Government to suspend the collection of revenue assessment till the ensuing year, but the Government has not acceded to our prayer. Therefore, we, the undersigned, hereby solemnly declare, that we shall not, of our own accord, pay to the Government the full or the remaining revenue for the year. We shall let the Government take whatever legal steps it may think fit, and gladly suffer the consequences of our non-payment. We shall rather let our lands be forfeited, than that by voluntary payment we should allow our case to be considered false or should compromise our self-respect. Should the Government, however, agree to suspend collection of the second instalment of the assessment throughout the district, such amongst us as are in a position to pay will pay up the whole or the balance of the revenue

that may be due. The reason why those who are able to pay still withhold payment is that if they pay up, the poorer ryots may in a panic sell their chattels or incur debts to pay their dues, and thereby bring suffering upon themselves. In these circumstances we feel, that for the sake of the poor, it is the duty even of those who can afford to pay to withhold payment of their assessment.'

I cannot devote many chapters to this struggle. And so a number of sweet recollections in this connection will have to be crowded out. Those who want to make a fuller and deeper study of this important fight would do well to read the full and authentic history of the Kheda Satyagraha by Sjt. Shankarlal Parikh of Kathlal, Kheda.

CHAPTER XXIV

'THE ONION THIEF'

CHAMPARAN being in a far away corner of India, and the press having been kept out of the campaign, it did not attract visitors from outside. Not so with the Kheda campaign, of which the happenings were reported in the press from day to day.

The Gujaratis were deeply interested in the fight which was for them a novel experiment. They were ready to pour forth their riches for the success of the cause. It was not easy for them to see that Satyagraha could not be conducted simply by means of money. Money is the thing that it least needs.

In spite of my remonstrance, the Bombay merchants sent us more money than necessary, so that we had some balance left at the end of the campaign.

At the same time the Satyagrahi volunteers had to learn the new lesson of simplicity. I cannot say that they imbibed it fully, but they considerably changed their ways of life.

For the Patidar farmers, too, the fight was quite a new thing. We had, therefore, to go about from village to village explaining the principles of Satyagraha.

The main thing was to rid the agriculturists of their fear by making them realise that the officials were not the masters, but the servants of the people, inasmuch as they received their salaries from the taxpayer. And then it seemed well nigh impossible to make them realise the duty of combining civility with fearlessness. Once they had shed the fear of the officials, how could they be stopped from returning their

insults? And yet if they resorted to incivility it would spoil their Satyagraha, like a drop of arsenic in milk. I realised later that they had less fully learnt the lesson of civility than I had expected. Experience has taught me that civility is the most difficult part of Satyagraha. Civility does not here mean the mere outward gentleness of speech cultivated for the occasion, but an inborn gentleness and desire to do the opponent good. These should show themselves in every act of a Satyagrahi.

In the initial stages, though the people exhibited much courage, the Government did not seem to be inclined to take strong action. But as the people's firmness showed no signs of wavering, the Government began coercion. The attachment officers sold people's cattle and seized whatever moveables they could lay hands on. Penalty notices were served, and in some cases standing crops were attached. This unnerved the peasants, some of whom paid up their

dues, while others desired to place safe moveables in the way of the officials so that they might attach them to realise the dues. On the other hand some were prepared to fight to the bitter end.

While these things were going on, one of Sjt. Shankarlal Parikh's tenants paid up the assessment in respect of his land. This created a sensation. Sjt. Shankarlal Parikh immediately made amends for his tenant's mistake by giving away for charitable purposes the land for which the assessment had been paid. He thus saved his honour and set a good example to others.

With a view to steeling the hearts of those who were frightened, I advised the people, under the leadership of Sjt. Mohanlal Pandya, to remove the crop of onion from a field which had been, in my opinion, wrongly attached. I did not regard this as civil disobedience, but even if it was, I suggested that this attachment of standing crops, though

it might be in accordance with law, was morally wrong, and was nothing short of looting, and that therefore it was the people's duty to remove the onion in spite of the order of attachment. This was a good opportunity for the people to learn a lesson in courting fines or imprisonment, which was the necessary consequence of such disobedience. For Sjt. Mohanlal Pandya it was a thing after his heart. He did not like the campaign to end without some one undergoing suffering in the shape of imprisonment for something done consistently with the principles of Satyagraha. So he volunteered to remove the onion crop from the field, and in this seven or eight friends joined him.

It was impossible for the Government to leave them free. The arrest of Sjt. Mohanlal and his companions added to the people's enthusiasm. When the fear of jail disappears, repression puts heart into the people. Crowds of them

besieged the court-house on the day of the hearing. Pandya and his companions were convicted and sentenced to a brief term of imprisonment. I was of opinion that the conviction was wrong, because the act of removing the onion crop could not come under the definition of 'theft' in the Penal Code. But no appeal was filed as the policy was to avoid the law courts.

A procession escorted the 'convicts' to jail, and on that day Sjt. Mohanlal Pandya earned from the people the honoured title of '*dungli chor*' (onion thief) which he enjoys to this day.

The conclusion of the Kheda Satyagraha I will leave to the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXV

END OF KHEDA SATYAGRAHA

THE campaign came to an unexpected end. It was clear that the people were exhausted, and I hesitated to let the unbending be driven to utter ruin. I was casting about for some graceful way of terminating the struggle which would be acceptable to a Satyagrahi. Such a one appeared quite unexpectedly. The Mamlatdar of the Nadiad Taluka sent me word, that if well-to-do Patidars paid up, the poorer ones would be granted suspension. I asked for a written undertaking to that effect which was given. But as a Mamlatdar could be responsible only for his Taluka, I

inquired of the Collector, who alone could give an undertaking in respect of the whole district, whether the Mamlatdar's undertaking was true for the whole district. He replied that orders declaring suspension in terms of the Mamlatdar's letter had been already issued. I was not aware of it, but if it was a fact, the people's pledge had been fulfilled. The pledge, it will be remembered, had the same things for its object, and so we expressed ourselves satisfied with the orders.

However the end was far from making me feel happy, inasmuch as it lacked the grace with which the termination of every Satyagraha campaign ought to be accompanied. The Collector carried on as though he had done nothing by way of a settlement. The poor were to be granted suspension, but hardly any got the benefit of it. It was the people's right to determine who was poor, but they could not exercise it. I was sad that they had not the strength to

exercise the right. Although, therefore, the termination was celebrated as a triumph of Satyagraha, I could not enthuse over it, as it lacked the essentials of a complete triumph.

The end of a Satyagraha campaign can be described as worthy, only when it leaves the Satyagrahis stronger and more spirited than they are in the beginning.

The campaign was not, however, without its indirect effective results which we can see today and the benefit of which we are reaping. The Kheda Satyagraha marks the beginning of an awakening among the peasants of Gujarat, the beginning of their true political education.

Dr. Besant's brilliant Home Rule agitation had certainly touched the peasants, but it was the Kheda campaign that compelled the educated public workers to establish contact with the actual life of the peasants. They learnt to identify themselves with the latter.

They found their proper sphere of work, their capacity for sacrifice increased. That Vallabhbhai found himself during this campaign was by itself no small achievement. We could realise its measure during the flood relief operations last year and the Bardoli Satyagraha this year. Public life in Gujarat became instinct with a new energy and a new vigour. The Patidar peasant came to an unforgettable consciousness of his strength. The lesson was indelibly imprinted on the public mind that the salvation of the people depends upon themselves, upon their capacity for suffering and sacrifice. Through the Kheda campaign Satyagraha took firm root in the soil of Gujarat.

Although therefore I found nothing to enthuse over in the termination of the Satyagraha, the Kheda peasants were jubilant, because they knew that what they had achieved was commensurate with their effort, and they had found the true and infallible method for a redress

of their grievances. This knowledge was enough justification for their jubilation.

Nevertheless the Kheda peasants had not fully understood the inner meaning of Satyagraha, and they saw it to their cost, as we shall see in the chapters to follow.

CHAPTER XXVI

PASSION FOR UNITY

THE Kheda campaign was launched while the deadly War in Europe was still going on. Now a crisis had arrived, and the Viceroy had invited various leaders to a War Conference in Delhi. I had also been urged to attend the Conference. I have already referred to the cordial relations between Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, and myself.

In response to the invitation I went to Delhi. I had however objections to taking part in the Conference, the principal one being the exclusion from it of leaders like the Ali Brothers. They

were then in jail. I had met them only once or twice, though I had heard much about them. Every one had spoken highly of their services and their courage. I had not then come in close touch with Hakim Saheb, but Principal Rudra and Dinabandhu Andrews had told me a deal in his praise. I had met Mr. Shuaib Qureshi and Mr. Khwaja at the Muslim League in Calcutta. I had also come in contact with Drs. Ansari and Abdur Rahman. I was seeking the friendship of good Musalmans, and was eager to understand the Musalman mind through contact with their purest and most patriotic representatives. I therefore never needed any pressure to go with them, wherever they took me, in order to get into intimate touch with them.

I had realised early enough in South Africa that there was no genuine friendship between the Hindus and the Musalmans. I never missed a single opportunity to remove obstacles in the way of unity. It was not in my nature

to placate any one by adulation, or at the cost of self-respect. But my South African experiences had convinced me that it would be on the question of Hindu Muslim unity that my *ahimsa* would be put to its severest test, and that the question presented the widest field for my experiments in *ahimsa*. The conviction is still there. Every moment of my life I realise that God is putting me on my trial.

Having such strong convictions on the question when I returned from South Africa, I prized the contact with the Brothers. But before closer touch could be established they were isolated. Maulana Mahomed Ali used to write long letters to me from Betul and Chhindwada whenever his jailers allowed him to do so. I applied for permission to visit the Brothers but to no purpose.

It was after the imprisonment of the Ali Brothers that I was invited by Muslim friends to attend the session of

the Muslim League at Calcutta. Being requested to speak, I addressed them on the duty of the Muslims to secure the Brothers' release. A little while after this I was taken by these friends to the Muslim College at Aligadh. There I invited the young men to be *fakirs* for the service of the motherland.

Next I opened correspondence with the Government for the release of the Brothers. In that connection I studied the Brothers' views and activities about the Khilafat. I had discussions with Musalman friends. I felt that if I would become a true friend of the Muslims, I must render all possible help in securing the release of the Brothers, and a just settlement of the Khilafat question. It was not for me to enter into the absolute merits of the question, provided there was nothing immoral in their demands. In matters of religion beliefs differ, and each one's is supreme for himself. If all had the same belief about all matters of religion there would be only one religion

in the world. As time progressed I found that the Muslim demand about the Khilafat was not only not against any ethical principle, but that the British Prime Minister had admitted the justice of the Muslim demand. I felt, therefore, bound to render what help I could in securing a due fulfilment of the Prime Minister's pledge. The pledge had been given in such clear terms that the examination of the Muslim demand on the merits was needed only to satisfy my own conscience.

Friends and critics have criticised my attitude regarding the Khilafat question. In spite of the criticism I feel that I have no reason to revise it or to regret my cooperation with the Muslims. I should adopt the same attitude should a similar occasion arise.

When, therefore, I went to Delhi, I had fully intended to submit the Muslim case to the Viceroy. The Khilafat question had not then assumed the shape it did subsequently.

But on my reaching Delhi another difficulty in the way of my attending the Conference arose. Dinabandhu Andrews raised a question about the morality of my participation in the War Conference. He told me of the controversy in the British press regarding secret treaties between England and Italy. How could I participate in the Conference, if England had entered into secret treaties with another European power, asked Mr. Andrews. I knew nothing of the treaties. Dinabandhu Andrews' word was enough for me. I therefore addressed a letter to Lord Chelmsford explaining my hesitation to take part in the Conference. He invited me to discuss the question with him. I had prolonged discussion with him and his Private Secretary Mr. Maffey. As a result I agreed to take part in the Conference. This was in effect the Viceroy's argument: 'Surely you do not believe that the Viceroy knows everything done by the British Cabinet. I do not claim, no one claims,

that the British Government is infallible. But if you agree that the Empire has been, on the whole, a power for good, if you believe that India has, on the whole, benefited by the British connection, would you not admit that it is the duty of every Indian citizen to help the Empire in the hour of its need? I too have read what the British papers say about the secret treaties. I can assure you that I know nothing beyond what the papers say, and you know the canards that these papers frequently start. Can you, acting on a mere newspaper report, refuse help to the Empire at such a critical juncture? You may raise whatever moral issues you like and challenge us asmuch as you please after the conclusion of the War, not today.'

The argument was not new. It appealed to me as new because of the manner in which, and the hour at which, it was presented, and I agreed to attend the Conference. As regards the Muslim demands I was to address a letter to the Viceroy.

CHAPTER XXVII

RECRUITING CAMPAIGN

SO I attended the Conference. The Viceroy was very keen on my supporting the resolution about recruiting. I asked for permission to speak in Hindi-Hindustani. The Viceroy acceded to my request, but suggested that I should speak also in English. I had no speech to make. I spoke but one sentence to this effect: 'With a full sense of my responsibility I beg to support the resolution.'

Many congratulated me on my having spoken in Hindustani. That was, they said, the first instance within living memory of any one having spoken in

Hindustani at such a meeting. The congratulations and the discovery that I was the first to speak in Hindustani at a Viceregal meeting hurt my national pride. I felt like shrinking into myself. What a tragedy that the language of the country should be tabooed in meetings held in the country, for work relating to the country, and that a speech there in Hindustani by a stray individual like myself should be a matter for congratulation! Incidents like these are reminders of the low state to which we have been reduced.

The one sentence that I uttered at the Conference had for me considerable significance. It was impossible for me to forget either the Conference or the resolution I supported. There was one undertaking that I had to fulfil while yet in Delhi. I had to write a letter to the Viceroy. This was no easy thing for me. I felt it my duty both in the interests of the Government and of the people to explain therein how and why I attended

the Conference, and to state clearly what the people expected from Government.

In the letter I expressed my regret for the exclusion from the Conference of leaders like Lokamanya Tilak and the Ali Brothers, and stated the people's minimum political demand as also the demands of the Muslims on account of the situation created by the War. I asked for permission to publish the letter and the Viceroy gladly gave it.

The letter had to be sent to Simla where the Viceroy had gone immediately after the Conference. The letter had for me considerable importance, and sending it by post would have meant delay. I wanted to save time, and yet I was not inclined to send it by any messenger I came across. I wanted some pure man to carry it and hand it personally at the Viceregal Lodge. Dinabandhu Andrews and Principal Rudra suggested the name of the good Rev. Ireland of the Cambridge Mission. He agreed to carry the letter if he might read it and if it

appealed to him as good. I had no objection as the letter was by no means private. He read it, liked it and expressed his willingness to carry out the mission. I offered him the second class fare, but he declined it saying he was accustomed to travelling intermediate. This he did though it was a night journey. His simplicity, and his straight and plainspoken manner captivated me. The letter thus delivered at the hands of a pure-minded man had, as I thought, the desired result. It eased my mind and cleared my way.

The other part of my obligation consisted in raising recruits. Where could I make a beginning except in Kheda? And whom could I invite to be the first recruits except my own co-workers? So as soon as I reached Nadiad I had a conference with Vallabhbhai and other friends. Some of them could not easily take to the proposal. Those who liked the proposal had misgivings about its success. There was no love lost between

the Government and the classes to which I wanted to make my appeal. The bitter experience they had had of the Government officials was still fresh in their memory.

And yet they were in favour of starting work. As soon as I set about my task my eyes were opened. My optimism received a rude shock. Whereas during the revenue campaign the people readily offered their carts free of charge, and two volunteers came forth when one was needed, it was difficult now to get a cart even on hire, to say nothing of volunteers. But we would not be dismayed. We decided to dispense with the use of carts and to do our journeys on foot. At this rate we had to trudge about 20 miles a day. If carts were not forthcoming, it was idle to expect people to feed us. It was hardly proper to ask for food. So it was decided that every volunteer must carry his food in his satchel. No bedding or sheet was necessary as it was summer.

We had meetings wherever we went. People did attend, but hardly one or two would offer themselves as recruits. 'You are a votary of Ahimsa, how can you ask us to take up arms?' 'What good has Government done for India to deserve our co-operation?' These and similar questions used to be put to us.

However our steady work began to tell. Quite a number of names were registered, and we hoped that we should be able to have a regular supply as soon as the first batch was sent. I had already begun to confer with the Commissioner as to where the recruits were to be accommodated.

The Commissioners in every division were holding conferences on the Delhi model. One such was held in Gujarat. My co-workers and I were invited to it. We attended, but I felt there was even less place for me here than at Delhi. In this atmosphere of servile submission I felt ill at ease. I spoke somewhat at length. I could say nothing to please

the officials, and had certainly one or two hard things to say.

I used to issue leaflets asking people to enlist as recruits. One of the arguments I had used was distasteful to the Commissioner: 'Among the many misdeeds of the British rule in India, history will look upon the Act depriving a whole nation of arms as the blackest. If we want the Arms Act to be repealed, if we want to learn the use of arms, here is a golden opportunity. If the middle classes render voluntary help to Government in the hour of its trial, distrust will disappear, and the ban on possessing arms will be withdrawn.' The Commissioner referred to this, and said that he appreciated my presence in the Conference in spite of the differences between us. And I had to justify my standpoint as courteously as I could.

Here is the letter to the Viceroy referred to above:

> 'As you are aware, after careful consideration, I felt constrained to convey to Your

Excellency that I could not attend the Conference for reasons stated in the letter of the 26th instant (April), but, after the interview you were good enough to grant me, I persuaded myself to join it, if for no other cause, then certainly out of my great regard for yourself. One of my reasons for abstention and perhaps the strongest was that Lokamanya Tilak, Mrs. Besant and the Ali Brothers, whom I regard as among the most powerful leaders of public opinion, were not invited to the Conference. I still feel that it was a grave blunder not to have asked them, and I respectfully suggest that that blunder might be possibly repaired if these leaders were invited to assist the Government by giving it the benefit of their advice at the Provincial Conferences, which, I understand, are to follow. I venture to submit that no Government can afford to disregard the leaders, who represent the large masses of the people as these do, even though they may hold views fundamentally different. At the same time it gives me pleasure to be able to say that the views of all parties were permitted to be freely expressed at the Committees of the Conference. For my part, I purposely refrained from stating my views at the

Committee at which I had the honour of serving, or at the Conference itself. I felt that I could best serve the objects of the Conference by simply tendering my support to the resolutions submitted to it, and this I have done without any reservation. I hope to translate the spoken word into action as early as the Government can see its way to accept my offer, which I am submitting simultaneously herewith in a separate letter.

'I recognise that in the hour of its danger we must give, as we have decided to give, ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire of which we aspire in the near future to be partners in the same sense as the Dominions overseas. But it is the simple truth that our response is due to the expectation that our goal will be reached all the more speedily. On that account, even as performance of duty automatically confers a corresponding right, people are entitled to believe that the imminent reforms alluded to in your speech will embody the main general principles of the Congress-League Scheme, and I am sure that it is this faith which has enabled many members of the Conference to tender to the Government their full-hearted co-operation.

'If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions, and not whisper "Home Rule" or "Responsible Government" during the pendency of the War. I would make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment, and I know that India, by this very act, would become the most favoured partner in the Empire, and racial distinctions would become a thing of the past. But practically the whole of educated India has decided to take a less effective course, and it is no longer possible to say that educated India does not exercise any influence on the masses. I have been coming into most intimate touch with the ryots ever since my return from South Africa to India, and I wish to assure you that the desire for Home Rule has widely penetrated them. I was present at the sessions of the last Congress, and I was a party to the resolution that full Responsible Government should be granted to British India within a period to be fixed definitely by a Parliamentary Statute. I admit that it is a bold step to take, but I feel sure that nothing less than a definite vision of Home Rule to be realised in the shortest possible time will satisfy the Indian people. I know that there

are many in India who consider no sacrifice is too great in order to achieve the end, and they are wakeful enough to realise that they must be equally prepared to sacrifice themselves for the Empire in which they hope and desire to reach their final status. It follows then that we can but accelerate our journey to the goal by silently and simply devoting ourselves heart and soul to the work of delivering the Empire from the threatening danger. It will be national suicide not to recognise this elementary truth. We must perceive that if we serve to save the Empire, we have in that very act secured Home Rule.

'Whilst, therefore, it is clear to me that we should give to the Empire every available man for its defence, I fear that I cannot say the same thing about financial assistance. My intimate intercourse with the ryots convinces me, that India has already donated to the Imperial Exchequer beyond her capacity. I know, that in making this statement, I am voicing the opinion of the majority of my countrymen.

'The Conference means for me, and I believe for many of us, a definite step in the consecration of our lives to the common cause, but ours is a peculiar position. We are today outside the partnership. Ours is a

consecration based on hope of better future. I should be untrue to you and to my country if I did not clearly and unequivocally tell you what that hope is. I do not bargain for its fulfilment, but you should know, that disappointment of hope means disillusion.

'There is one thing I may not omit. You have appealed to us to sink domestic differences. If the appeal involves the toleration of tyranny and wrong-doing on the part of officials, I am powerless to respond. I shall resist organised tyranny to the uttermost. The appeal must be to the officials that they do not ill-treat a single soul, and that they consult and respect popular opinion as never before. In Champaran by resisting an age-long tyranny I have shown the ultimate sovereignty of British justice. In Kheda a population that was cursing the Government now feels, that it, and not the Government, is the power when it is prepared to suffer for the truth it represents. It is, therefore, losing its bitterness and is saying to itself, that the Government must be a Government for people, for it tolerates orderly and respectful disobedience where injustice is felt. Thus Champaran and Kheda affairs are my direct, definite and special contribution to the War. Ask me to

suspend my activities in that direction and you ask me to suspend my life. If I could popularise the use of soul-force, which is but another name for love-force, in place of brute force, I know that I could present you with an India that could defy the whole world to do its worst. In season and out of season, therefore, I shall discipline myself to express in my life this eternal law of suffering, and present it for acceptance to those who care, and if I take part in any other activity, the motive is to show the matchless superiority of that law.

'Lastly, I would like you to ask His Majesty's Ministers to give definite assurance about Mohammedan States. I am sure you know that every Mohammedan is deeply interested in them. As a Hindu, I cannot be indifferent to their cause. Their sorrows must be our sorrows. In the most scrupulous regard for the rights of those States and for the Muslim sentiment as to their places of worship, and your just and timely treatment of India's claim to Home Rule lies the safety of the Empire. I write this, because I love the English nation, and I wish to evoke in every Indian the loyalty of Englishmen.'

CHAPTER XXVIII

NEAR DEATH'S DOOR

I very nearly ruined my constitution during the recruiting campaign. In those days my food principally consisted of groundnut butter and lemons. I knew that the butter could be easily overeaten to the detriment of one's health, and yet I allowed myself to overeat it. This gave me a slight attack of dysentery. I did not take serious notice of this, and went that evening to the Ashram, as was my wont every now and then. I scarcely took any medicine in those days. I thought I should get well if I skipped a meal, and indeed I felt fairly free from trouble as I omitted the morning meal

next day. I knew however, that to be entirely free, I must prolong my fast, and if I ate anything at all, I should have nothing but fruit juices.

There was some festival that day, and although I had told Kasturbai that I should have nothing for my midday meal, she tempted me and I succumbed. As I was under a vow of taking no milk or milk products, she had specially prepared for me a sweet wheaten porridge with oil added to it instead of *ghi*. She had reserved too a bowlful of *mung* for me. I was fond of these things, and I readily took them, hoping, that without coming to grief, I should eat just enough to please Kasturbai and to satisfy my palate. But the Devil had been only waiting for an opportunity. Instead of eating very little I had my fill of the meal. This was sufficient invitation for the angel of death. Within an hour the dysentery appeared in acute form.

The same evening I had to go back to Nadiad. I walked with very great

difficulty to the Sabarmati station, a distance of only ten furlongs. Sjt. Vallabhbhai, who joined me at Ahmedabad, saw that I was unwell, but I did not allow him to guess how unbearable the pain was.

We reached Nadiad at about ten o'clock. The Hindu Anathashram where we had our headquarters was only half a mile from the station; but it was as good as ten for me. I somehow managed to reach the quarters, but the griping pain was steadily increasing. Instead of using the usual latrine which was a long way off, I asked for a commode to be placed in the adjoining room. I was ashamed to have to ask for this, but there was no escape. Sjt. Phulchand immediately procured a commode. All the friends surrounded me deeply concerned. They were all love and attention, but they could not relieve my pain. And my obstinacy added to their helplessness. I refused all medical aid. I would take no medicine, but preferred to suffer the

penalty for my folly. So they looked on in helpless dismay. I must have had thirty to forty motions in twenty four hours. I fasted, not taking even fruit juices in the beginning. The appetite had all gone. I had thought all along that I had an iron frame, but I found that my body had now become a lump of clay. It had lost all power of resistance. Dr. Kanuga came and pleaded with me to take medicine. I declined. He offered to give me an injection. I declined that too. My ignorance about injections was in those days quite ridiculous. I believed that an injection must be some kind of serum. Later I discovered that the injection that the doctor suggested was a vegetable substance, but the discovery was too late to be of use. The motions still continued, leaving me completely exhausted. The exhaustion brought on a delirious fever. The friends got more nervous, and called in more doctors. But what could they do with a patient who would not listen to them?

Sheth Ambalal with his good wife came down to Nadiad, conferred with my co-workers and removed me with the greatest care to his Mirzapur bungalow in Ahmedabad. It was impossible for any one to receive more loving and selfless service than I had the privilege of having during this illness. But a sort of low fever persisted, wearing away my body from day to day. I felt that the illness was bound to be prolonged and possibly fatal. Surrounded as I was with all the love and attention that could be showered on me under Sheth Ambalal's roof, I began to get restless and urged him to remove me to the Ashram. He had to yield to my importunity.

Whilst I was thus tossing on the bed of pain in the Ashram, Sjt. Vallabhbhai brought the news, that Germany had been completely defeated, and that the Commissioner had sent word that recruiting was no longer necessary. The news that I had no longer to worry myself about recruiting came as a very great relief.

I had now been trying hydropathy which gave some relief, but it was a hard job to build up the body. The many medical advisers overwhelmed me with advice, but I could not persuade myself to take anything. Two or three suggested meat broth as a way out of the milk vow, and cited authorities from Ayurveda in support of their advice. One of them strongly recommended eggs. But for all of them I had but one answer — no.

For me the question of diet was not one to be determined on the authority of the Shastras. It was one interwoven with my course of life which is guided by principles no longer depending upon outside authority. I had no desire to live at the cost of them. How could I relinquish a principle in respect of myself, when I had enforced it relentlessly in respect of my wife, children and friends?

This protracted and first long illness in my life thus afforded me a unique opportunity to examine my principles and to test them. One night I gave myself

up to despair. I felt that I was at death's door. I sent word to Anasuya-behn. She ran down to the Ashram. Vallabhbhai came up with Dr. Kanuga who felt my pulse and said, 'Your pulse is quite good. I see absolutely no danger. This is a nervous breakdown due to extreme weakness.' But I was far from being reassured. I passed the night without sleep.

The morning broke without death coming. But I could not get rid of the feeling that the end was near, and so I began to devote all my waking hours to listening to the Gita being read to me by the inmates of the Ashram. I was incapable of reading. I was hardly inclined to talk. The slightest talk meant a strain on the brain. All interest in living had ceased, as I have never liked to live for the sake of living. It was such an agony to live on in that helpless state, doing nothing, receiving the service of friends and co-workers, and watching the body slowly wearing away.

Whilst I lay thus ever expectant of death, Dr. Talvalkar came one day with a strange creature. He hailed from Maharashtra. He was not known to fame, but the moment I saw him I found that he was a crank like myself. He had come to try his treatment on me. He had almost finished his course of studies in the Grant Medical College without taking the degree. Later I came to know that he was a member of the Brahmo Samaj. Sjt. Kelkar, for that is his name, is a man of an independent and obstinate temperament. He swears by the ice treatment which he wanted to try on me. We gave him the name of 'Ice Doctor.' He is quite confident, that he has discovered certain things which have escaped qualified doctors. It is a pity both for him and me, that he has not been able to infect me with his faith in his system. I believe in his system up to a certain point, but I am afraid he has been hasty in arriving at certain conclusions.

But, whatever may be the merits of his discoveries, I allowed him to experiment on my body. I did not mind external treatment. The treatment consisted in the application of ice all over the body. Whilst I am unable to endorse the effect he claims his treatment had on me, it certainly infused in me a new hope and a new energy, and the mind naturally reacted on the body. I began to have an appetite, and to have a gentle walk for five to ten minutes. He now suggested a reform in my diet. Said he: 'I assure you that you will have more energy and regain your strength quicker if you take raw eggs. Eggs are as harmless as milk. They certainly cannot come under the category of meat. And do you know that all eggs are not fertilised? There are sterilised eggs on the market.' I was not however prepared to take even the sterilised eggs. But the improvement was enough to give me interest in public activities.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE ROWLATT BILLS AND MY DILEMMA

FRIENDS and doctors assured me that I should recuperate quicker by a change to Matheran, so I went there. But the water at Matheran being very hard, it made my stay there extremely difficult. As a result of the attack of the dysentery that I had, my anal tract had become extremely tender, and owing to fissures I felt an excruciating pain at the time of evacuation, so that the very idea of eating filled me with dread. Before the week was over I had to flee from Matheran. Shankarlal Banker now constituted himself the guardian of my health, and pressed me to consult

Dr. Dalal. Dr. Dalal was called accordingly. His capacity for taking instantaneous decisions captured me.

He said: 'I cannot rebuild your body, unless you take milk. If in addition you would take iron and arsenic injections, I would guarantee fully to renovate your constitution.'

'You can give me the injections,' I replied, 'but milk is a different question; I have a vow against it.'

'What exactly is the nature of your vow?' the doctor inquired.

I told him the whole history and the reasons behind my vow, how, since I had come to know that the cow and the buffalo were subjected to the process of *phooka*, I had conceived a strong disgust for milk. Moreover I had always held that milk is not the natural diet of man. I had therefore abjured its use altogether. Kasturbai was standing near my bed listening all the while that this conversation was going on.

'But surely you cannot have any objection to goat's milk then,' she interposed.

The doctor too took up the strain. 'If you will take goat's milk, it will be enough for me,' he said.

I succumbed. My intense eagerness to take up the Satyagraha fight had created in me a strong desire to live. And so I contented myself with adhering to the letter of my vow only, and sacrificed its spirit. For although I had only the milk of the cow and the she-buffalo in mind when I took the vow, by natural implication it covered the milk of all animals. Nor could it be right for me to use milk at all, so long as I held that milk is not the natural diet of man. Yet knowing all this I agreed to take goat's milk. The will to live proved stronger than the devotion to truth, and for once the votary of truth compromised his sacred ideal by his eagerness to take up the Satyagraha fight. The memory of this

action even now rankles in my breast and fills me with remorse, and I am constantly thinking how to give up goat's milk. But I cannot yet free myself from that subtlest of temptations, the desire to serve, which still holds me.

My experiments in dietetics are dear to me as a part of my researches in Ahimsa. They give me recreation and joy. But my use of goat's milk today troubles me not from the view-point of dietetic Ahimsa so much as that of truth, a breach of pledge. It seems to me that I understand the ideal of truth better than that of Ahimsa, and my experience tells me that if I let go my hold of truth, I shall never be able to solve the riddle of Ahimsa. The ideal of truth requires that vows taken should be fulfilled in the letter as well as in the spirit. In the present case I killed the spirit — the soul of my vow — by adhering to its outer form only, and that is what galls me. But in spite of this clear knowledge I cannot see my way straight before me.

In other words, perhaps, I have not the courage to follow the straight course. Both at bottom mean one and the same thing, for doubt is invariably the result of want or weakness of faith. 'Lord, give me faith' is, therefore, my prayer day and night.

Soon after I began taking goat's milk, Dr. Dalal performed on me a successful operation for fissures. As I recuperated, my desire to live revived, especially because God had kept work in store for me.

I had hardly begun to feel my way towards recovery, when I happened casually to read in the papers the Rowlatt Committee's report, that had just been published. Its recommendations startled me. Shankarlal Banker and Umar Sobani approached me with the suggestion that I should take some prompt action in the matter. In about a month I went to Ahmedabad. I mentioned my apprehensions to Vallabhbhai who used to come to see me

almost daily. 'Something must be done,' said I to him. 'But what can we do in the circumstances?' he asked in reply. I answered, 'If even a handful of men can be found to sign the pledge of resistance, and the proposed measure is passed into law in defiance of it, we ought to offer Satyagraha at once. If I was not laid up like this, I should give battle against it all alone, and expect others to follow suit. But in my present helpless condition I feel myself to be altogether unequal to the task.'

As a result of this talk, it was decided to call a small meeting of such persons as were in touch with me. The recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee seemed to me to be altogether unwarranted by the evidence published in its report, and were, I felt, such that no self-respecting people could submit to them.

The proposed conference was at last held at the Ashram. Hardly a score of persons had been invited to it. So far as

I remember, besides Vallabhbhai, among those who attended were Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Mr. Horniman, the late Mr. Umar Sobani, Sjt. Shankarlal Banker and Shrimati Anasuyabehn. The Satyagraha pledge was drafted at this meeting, and, as far as I recollect, was signed by all present. I was not editing any journal at that time, but I used occasionally to ventilate my views through the daily press. I followed the practice on this occasion. Shankarlal Banker took up the agitation in right earnest, and for the first time, I got an idea of his wonderful capacity for organisation and sustained work.

As all hope of any of the existing institutions adopting a novel weapon like Satyagraha seemed to me to be vain, a separate body called the Satyagraha Sabha was established at my instance. Its principal members were drawn from Bombay itself, where naturally therefore, its headquarters were fixed. The intending covenanters began to sign the

Satyagraha pledge in large numbers, bulletins were issued, and popular meetings began to be held everywhere recalling all the familiar features of the Kheda campaign.

I became the president of the Satyagraha Sabha. I soon found that there was not likely to be much chance of agreement between myself and the intelligentsia composing this Sabha. My insistence on the use of Gujarati in the Sabha, as also some of my other methods of work, that would appear to be peculiar, caused them no small worry and embarrassment. I must say to their credit, however, that most of them generously put up with my idiosyncrasies.

But, from the very beginning, it seemed clear to me that the Sabha was not likely to live long. I could see that already my emphasis on truth and Ahimsa had begun to be disliked by some of its members. Nevertheless in its early stages our new activity went on at full blast, and the movement gathered head rapidly.

CHAPTER XXX

THAT WONDERFUL SPECTACLE!

THUS, while on the one hand, the agitation against the Rowlatt Committee's report gathered volume and intensity, on the other, the Government grew more and more determined to give effect to its recommendations, and the Rowlatt Bill was published. I have attended the proceedings of India's legislative chamber only once in my life, and that was on the occasion of the debate on this Bill. Shastriji delivered an impassioned speech in which he uttered a solemn note of warning to the Government. The Viceroy seemed to be listening spell-bound, his eyes rivetted

on Shastriji as the latter poured forth the hot stream of his eloquence. For the moment it seemed to me as if the Viceroy could not but be deeply moved by it, it was so true and so full of feeling.

But you can wake a man only if he is really asleep; no effort that you may make will produce any effect upon him if he is merely pretending sleep. That was precisely the Government's position. It was anxious only to go through the farce of legal formality. Its decision had already been made. Shastriji's solemn warning was, therefore, entirely lost upon the Government.

In these circumstances mine could only be a cry in the wilderness. I earnestly pleaded with the Viceroy. I addressed him private letters as also public letters, in the course of which I clearly told him that the Government's action left me no other course except to resort to Satyagraha. But it was all in vain.

The Bill had not yet been gazetted as an Act. I was in a very weak condition, but I decided to take the risk of a long journey when I received an invitation from Madras. I could not at that time sufficiently raise my voice for meetings. The incapacity to address meetings standing still abides. My entire frame would shake, and heavy throbs would start on an attempt to speak standing for any length of time.

I have ever felt myself at home in the South. Thanks to my South African work I felt I had some sort of special right over the Tamils and Telugus, and the good people of the South have never belied my belief. The invitation had come over the signature of the late Sjt. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar. But the man behind the invitation, as I subsequently learnt on my way to Madras, was Rajagopalachari. This might be said to be my first acquaintance with him; at any rate this was the first time that we came to know each other personally.

Rajagopalachari had then only recently left Salem to settle down for legal practice in Madras at the pressing invitation of friends like the late Sjt. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, and that with a view to taking a more active part in public life. It was with him that we had put up in Madras. This discovery I made, only after we had stayed with him for a couple of days. For, since the bungalow that we were staying in belonged to Sjt. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, I was under the impression that we were his guests. Mahadev Desai however corrected me. He very soon formed a close acquaintance with Rajagopalachari, who, from his innate shyness, kept himself constantly in the background. But Mahadev put me on my guard. 'You should cultivate this man,' he said to me one day.

And so I did. We daily discussed together plans of the fight, but beyond the holding of public meetings I could not then think of any other programme.

I felt myself at a loss to discover how to offer civil disobedience against the Rowlatt Bill if it was finally passed into law. One could disobey it, only if the Government gave one the opportunity for it. Failing that, could we civilly disobey other laws? And if so, where was the line to be drawn? These, and a host of similar questions, formed the theme of these discussions of ours.

Sjt. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar called together a small conference of leaders to thrash out the matter. Among those who took a conspicuous part in it was Sjt. Vijayaraghavachari. He suggested that I should draw up a comprehensive manual of the science of Satyagraha, embodying even minute details. I felt the task to be beyond my capacity, and I confessed as much to him.

While these cogitations were still going on, news was received that the Rowlatt Bill had been published as an Act. That night I fell asleep while thinking over the question. Towards the small hours of

the morning I woke up somewhat earlier than usual. I was still in that twilight condition between sleep and consciousness when suddenly the idea broke upon me — it was as if in a dream. Early in the morning I related the whole story to Rajagopalachari.

'The idea came to me last night in a dream, that we should call upon the country to observe a general *hartal*. Satyagraha is a process of self-purification, and ours is a sacred fight, and it seems to me to be in the fitness of things that it should be commenced with an act of self-purification. Let all the people of India, therefore, suspend their business on that day, and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer. The Musalmans may not fast for more than one day; so the duration of the fast should be 24 hours. It is very difficult to say whether all the provinces would respond to this appeal of ours or not, but I feel fairly sure of Bombay, Madras, Bihar and Sindh. I think we should

have every reason to feel satisfied even if all these places observe the *hartal* fittingly.'

Rajagopalachari was at once taken up with my suggestion. Other friends too welcomed it, when it was communicated to them later. I drafted a brief appeal. The date of the *hartal* was first fixed on the 30th March 1919, but was subsequently changed to 6th April. The people thus had only a short notice of the *hartal.* As the work had to be started at once, there was hardly any time to give longer notice.

But who knows how it all came about? The whole of India from one end to the other, towns as well as villages, observed a complete *hartal* on that day. It was a most wonderful spectacle.

CHAPTER XXXI

THAT MEMORABLE WEEK!—I

AFTER a short tour in South India I reached Bombay, I think on the 4th April, having received a wire from Sjt. Shankarlal Banker asking me to be present there for the 6th of April celebrations.

But in the meanwhile Delhi had already observed the *hartal* on the 30th March. The word of Swami Shraddhanandji and the late Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb was law there. The wire about the postponement of the *hartal* till the 6th of April had reached there too late. Delhi had never witnessed a *hartal* like that before. The Hindus and Musalmans

seemed united like one man. Swami Shraddhanandji was invited to deliver a speech in the Jumma Masjid, which he did. All this was more than the authorities could bear. The police checked the *hartal* procession as it was proceeding towards the railway station, and opened fire, causing a number of casualties, and the reign of repression commenced in Delhi. Shraddhanandji urgently summoned me to Delhi. I wired back, saying I would start for Delhi immediately after the 6th of April celebrations were over in Bombay.

The story of happenings in Delhi was repeated with variations in Lahore and Amritsar. From Amritsar Drs. Satyapal and Kitchlu had sent me a pressing invitation to go there. I was altogether unacquainted with them at that time, but I communicated to them my intention to visit Amritsar after Delhi.

On the morning of the 6th the citizens of Bombay flocked in their thousands to the Chowpati for a bath in

the sea, after which they moved on in a procession to Thakudrvar. The procession included a fair sprinkling of women and children, while the Musalmans joined it in large numbers. From Thakurdvar some of us who were in the procession were taken by the Musalman friends to a mosque near by, where Mrs. Naidu and myself were made to deliver speeches. Sjt. Vithaldas Jerajani proposed, that we should then and there administer the Swadeshi and Hindu Muslim unity pledges to the people, but I resisted the proposal on the ground, that pledges should not be administered or taken in precipitate hurry, and that we should be satisfied with what was already being done by the people. A pledge once taken, I argued, must not be broken afterwards; therefore it was necessary that the implications of the Swadeshi pledge should be clearly understood, and the grave responsibility entailed by the pledge regarding Hindu Muslim unity fully realised by all concerned. In the end I suggested that

those who wanted to take the pledges should again assemble on the following morning for the purpose.

Needless to say the *hartal* in Bombay was a complete success. Full preparation had been made for starting the civil disobedience. Two or three things had been discussed in this connection. It was decided, that civil disobedience might be offered in respect of such laws only as easily lent themselves to being disobeyed by the masses. The salt tax was extremely unpopular, and a powerful movement had been for some time past going on to secure its repeal, I therefore suggested, that the people might prepare salt from sea-water in their own houses in disregard of the Salt Laws. My other suggestion was about the sale of proscribed literature. Two of my books, *viz., Hind Swaraj* and *Sarvodaya* (Gujarati adaptation of Ruskin's *Unto this Last*), that had been already proscribed, came handy for this purpose. To print and sell them openly seemed to

be the easiest way of offering civil disobedience. A sufficient number of copies of the books was therefore printed, and it was arranged to sell them at the end of the monster meeting that was to be held that evening after the breaking of the fast.

On the evening of the 6th, an army of volunteers issued forth accordingly with this prohibited literature to sell it among the people. Both Shrimati Sarojinidevi and I went out in cars. All the copies were soon sold out. The proceeds of the sale were to be utilised for furthering the civil disobedience campaign. Both these books were priced at four annas per copy, but I hardly remember anybody having purchased them from me at their face value merely. Quite a large number of people simply poured out all the cash that was in their pockets to purchase their copy. Five and ten rupee notes just flew out to cover the price of a single copy, while in one case I remember having sold a copy for

fifty rupees! It was duly explained to the people, that they were liable to be arrested and imprisoned for purchasing the proscribed literature. But for the moment they had shed all fear of jail going.

It was subsequently learnt, that the Government had conveniently taken the view, that the books that had been proscribed by it had not in fact been sold, and that what we had sold was not held as coming under the definition of proscribed literature. The reprint was held by the Government to be a new edition of the books that had been proscribed, and to sell them thus did not constitute an offence under the law. This news caused general disappointment.

The next morning another meeting was held for the administration of the pledges with regard to Swadeshi and Hindu Muslim unity. Vithaldas Jerajani for the first time realised, that all is not gold that glitters. Only a handful of persons came. I distinctly remember

some of the sisters who were present on that occasion. Men who attended were also very few. I had already drafted the pledge and brought it with me. I thoroughly explained its meaning to those present before I administered it to them. The paucity of the attendance neither pained nor surprised me, for I have noticed this characteristic difference in the popular attitude — partiality for exciting work, dislike for quiet constructive effort. The difference has persisted to this day.

But I shall have to devote to this subject a chapter by itself. To return to the story. On the night of the 7th I started for Delhi and Amritsar. On reaching Mathura on the 8th I first heard echoes about my probable arrest. At the next stoppage after Mathura Acharya Gidvani came to meet me, and gave me definite news that I was to be arrested, and offered services to me if I should need them. I thanked him for the offer, assuring him that I would not fail to

avail myself of it, if and when I felt it necessary.

Before the train had reached Palwal railway station, I was served with a written order to the effect, that I was prohibited from entering the boundary of the Punjab, as my presence there was likely to result in a disturbance of the peace. I was asked by the police to get down from the train. I refused to do so saying, 'I want to go to the Punjab in response to a pressing invitation, not to foment unrest but to allay it. I am therefore sorry that it is not possible for me to comply with this order.'

At last the train reached Palwal. Mahadev was accompanying me. I asked him to proceed to Delhi to convey to Swami Shraddhanandji the news about what had happened, and to ask the people to remain calm. He was to explain, why I had decided to disobey the order served upon me and to suffer the penalty for disobeying it, and also why it would spell victory for our side if we

could maintain perfect peace in spite of any punishment that might be inflicted upon me.

At Palwal railway station I was taken out of the train and put under police custody. A train from Delhi came in a short time. I was made to enter a third class carriage, the police party accompanying. On reaching Mathura I was taken to the police barracks, but no police official could tell me as to what they proposed to do with me or where I was to be taken next. Early at 4 o'clock the next morning I was waked up and put in a goods train that was going towards Bombay. At noon I was again made to get down at Sawai Madhopur. Mr. Bowring, Inspector of Police, who arrived by the mail train from Lahore now took charge of me. I was put in a first class compartment with him. And from an ordinary prisoner I became a 'gentleman' prisoner. The officer commenced a long panegyric of Sir Michael O'Dwyer. Sir Michael had nothing against

me personally, he went on; only he apprehended a disturbance of the peace if I entered the Punjab and so on. In the end he requested me to return to Bombay of my own accord and agree not to cross the frontier of the Punjab. I replied, that I could not possibly comply with the order, and that I was not prepared of my own accord to go back. Whereupon the officer seeing no other help told me, that he would have to enforce the law against me. 'But what do you want to do with me?' I asked him. He replied, that he himself did not know, but was awaiting further orders. 'For the present,' he said, 'I am taking you to Bombay.'

Thus we reached Surat. Here I was made over to the charge of another police officer. 'You are now free,' the officer told me when we had reached Bombay. 'It would however be better,' he added, 'if you get down near the Marine Lines where I shall get the train stopped for you. At Colaba there is

likely to be a big crowd.' I told him that I would be glad to follow his wish. He was pleased, and thanked me for it. Accordingly I alighted at the Marine Lines. The carriage of a friend just happened to be passing by. It took me and left me at Revashankar Jhaveri's place. The friend told me, that the news of my arrest had incensed the people, and roused them to a pitch of mad frenzy. 'An outbreak is apprehended every minute near Pydhuni, the Magistrate and the police have already arrived there,' he added.

Scarcely had I reached my destination, when Umar Sobani and Anasuyabehn arrived, and asked me to motor to Pydhuni at once. 'The people have become impatient, and are very much excited,' they said, 'we cannot pacify them. Your presence alone can do it.'

I got into the car. Near Pydhuni I saw, that a huge crowd had gathered. On seeing me the people went mad with joy. A procession was immediately

formed, and the sky was rent with the shouts of *Vande mataram* and *Allaho akbar*. At Pydhuni we sighted a body of mounted police. Brickbats were raining down from above. I beseeched the crowd to be calm, but it seemed as if we should not be able to escape the shower of brickbats. As the procession issued out of Abdur Rahman Street, and was about to proceed towards the Crawford Market, it suddenly found itself confronted by a body of the mounted police, who had arrived there to prevent it from proceeding further in the direction of the Fort. The crowd was densely packed. It had almost broken through the police cordon. There was hardly any chance of my voice being heard in that vast concourse. Just then the officer in charge of the mounted police gave the order to disperse the crowd, and at once the mounted party charged upon the crowd brandishing their lances as they went. For a moment I felt, that I would be hurt. But my apprehension was

groundless, the lances just grazed the car as the lancers swiftly passed by. The ranks of the people were soon broken, and they were thrown into utter confusion which was soon converted into rout. Some got trampled under foot, others were badly mauled and crushed. In that seething mass of humanity there was hardly any room for the horses to pass, nor was there any exit by which the people could disperse. So the lancers blindly cut their way through the crowd. I hardly imagine they could see what they were doing. The whole thing presented a most dreadful spectacle. The horsemen and the people were mixed together in mad confusion.

Thus the crowd was dispersed and its progress checked. Our motor was allowed to proceed. I had it stopped before the Commissioner's office, and got down to complain to him about the conduct of the police.

CHAPTER XXXII

THAT MEMORABLE WEEK!—II

SO I went to the Commissioner Mr. Griffith's office. All about the staircase leading to the office I saw soldiers armed from top to toe, as though for military action. The verandah was all astir. When I was admitted to the office, I saw Mr. Bowring sitting with Mr. Griffith.

I described to the Commissioner the scenes I had witnessed. He replied briefly: 'I did not want the procession to proceed to the Fort, as a disturbance was inevitable there. And as I saw that the people would not listen to persuasion, I could not help ordering the mounted police to charge through the crowd.'

'But,' said I, 'you knew what the consequences must be. The horses were bound to trample on the people. I think it was quite unnecessary to send that contingent of mounted men.'

'You cannot judge that,' said Mr. Griffith. 'We police officers know better than you the effect of your teaching on the people. If we did not start with drastic measures, the situation would pass out of our hands. I tell you, that the people are sure to go out of your control. Disobedience of law will quickly appeal to them, it is beyond them to understand the duty of keeping peaceful. I have no doubt about your intentions, but the people will not understand them. They will follow their natural instinct.'

'It is there that I join issue with you,' I replied. 'The people are not by nature violent but peaceful.'

And thus we argued at length. Ultimately Mr. Griffith said, 'But suppose you were convinced, that your teaching

had been lost on the people, what would you do?'

'I should suspend civil disobedience if I were so convinced.'

'What do you mean? You told Mr. Bowring, that you would proceed to the Punjab the moment you were released.'

'Yes, I wanted to do so by the next available train. But it is out of the question today.'

'If you will be patient, the conviction is sure to grow on you. Do you know what is happening in Ahmedabad? and what has happened in Amritsar? People have everywhere gone nearly mad. I am not yet in possession of all the facts. The telegraph wires have been cut in some places. I put it to you that the responsibility for all these disturbances lies on you.'

'I assure you I should readily take it upon myself wherever I discovered it. But I should be deeply pained and surprised, if I found that there were

disturbances in Ahmedabad. I cannot answer for Amritsar. I have never been there, no one knows me there. But even about the Punjab I am certain of this much, that had not the Punjab Government prevented my entry into the Punjab, I should have been considerably helpful in keeping the peace there. By preventing me they gave the people unnecessary provocation.'

And so we argued on and on. It was impossible for us to agree. I told him, that I intended to address a meeting on Chowpati and to ask the people to keep the peace, and took leave of him. The meeting was held on the Chowpati sands. I spoke at length on the duty of non-violence and on the limitations of Satyagraha, and said: 'Satyagraha is essentially a weapon of the truthful. A Satyagrahi is pledged to non-violence, and unless people observe it in thought, word and deed, I cannot offer mass Satyagraha.'

Anasuyabehn, too, had received news of disturbances in Ahmedabad. Some one had spread a rumour that she also had been arrested. The mill-hands had gone mad over her rumoured arrest, struck work and committed acts of violence, and a sergeant had been done to death.

I proceeded to Ahmedabad. I learnt, that an attempt had been made to pull up the rails near the Nadiad railway station, that a Government officer had been murdered in Viramgam, and that Ahmedabad was under martial law. The people were terror-stricken. They had indulged in acts of violence, and were being made to pay for them with interest.

A police officer was waiting at the station to escort me to Mr. Pratt, the Commissioner. I found him in a state of rage. I spoke to him gently, and expressed my regret for the disturbances. I suggested, that martial law was unnecessary, and declared my readiness to co-operate in all efforts to restore peace.

I asked for permission to hold a public meeting on the grounds of the Sabarmati Ashram. The proposal appealed to him, and the meeting was held, I think, on Sunday, the 13th of April, and martial law was withdrawn the same day or the day after. Addressing the meeting I tried to bring home to the people the sense of their wrong, declared a penitential fast of three days for myself, appealed to the people to go on a similar fast for a day, and suggested to those who had been guilty of acts of violence to confess their guilt.

I saw my duty as clear as daylight. It was unbearable for me to find, that the labourers, amongst whom I had spent a good deal of my time, whom I had served, and from whom I had expected better things, had taken part in the riots, and I felt I was a sharer in their guilt.

Just as I suggested to the people to confess their guilt, I suggested to the Government to condone the crimes. Neither accepted my suggestion.

The late Sir Ramanbhai and other citizens of Ahmedabad came to me with an appeal to suspend Satyagraha. The appeal was needless, for I had already made up my mind to suspend Satyagraha so long as the people had not learnt the lesson of peace. The friends went away happy.

There were however others who were unhappy over the decision. They felt, that if I expected peace everywhere and regarded it as a condition precedent to launching Satyagraha, mass Satyagraha would be an impossibility. I was sorry to disagree with them. If those, amongst whom I worked, and whom I expected to be prepared for non-violence and self-suffering, could not be non-violent, Satyagraha was certainly impossible. I was firmly of opinion, that those who wanted to lead the people to Satyagraha ought to be able to keep the people within the limited non-violence expected of them. I hold the same opinion even today.

CHAPTER XXXIII

'A HIMALAYAN MISCALCULATION'

ALMOST immediately after the Ahmedabad meeting I went to Nadiad. It was here that I first used the expression 'Himalayan miscalculation' which obtained such a wide currency afterwards. Even at Ahmedabad I had begun to have a dim perception of my mistake. But when I reached Nadiad and saw the actual state of things there, and heard reports about a large number of people from Kheda district having been arrested, it suddenly dawned upon me, that I had committed a grave error in calling upon the people in the Kheda district and elsewhere to launch upon

civil disobedience prematurely, as it now seemed to me. I was addressing a public meeting. My confession brought down upon me no small amount of ridicule. But I have never regretted having made that confession. For I have always held that it is only when one sees one's own mistakes with a convex lens, and does just the reverse in the case of others, that one is able to arrive at a just relative estimate of the two. I further believe, that a scrupulous and conscientious observance of this rule is necessary for one who wants to be a Satyagrahi.

Let us now see what that Himalayan miscalculation was. Before one can be fit for the practice of civil disobedience one must have rendered a willing and respectful obedience to the state laws. For the most part we obey such laws out of fear of the penalty for their breach, and this holds good particularly in respect of such laws as do not involve a moral principle. For instance, an honest, respectable man will not suddenly take

to stealing irrespective of whether there is a law against stealing or not, but this very man will not feel any remorse for failure to observe the rule about carrying head-lights on bicycles after dark. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he would at once take kindly to advice about being more careful in this respect. But he would observe any obligatory rule of this kind, if only to escape the inconvenience of facing a prosecution for a breach of the rule. Such compliance will not however constitute the willing and spontaneous obedience that is required of a Satyagrahi. A Satyagrahi obeys the laws of society intelligently and of his own free will, because he considers it to be his sacred duty to do so. It is only when a person has thus obeyed the laws of society scrupulously that he is in a position to judge as to which particular rules are good and just, and which unjust and iniquitous. Only then does the right accrue to him of the civil disobedience of certain laws in well

defined circumstances. My error lay in my failure to observe this necessary limitation. I had called upon the people to launch upon civil disobedience before they had thus qualified themselves for it, and this mistake of mine seemed to me to be of a Himalayan magnitude. As soon as I entered the Kheda district, all the old recollections of the Kheda Satyagraha struggle came back to me, and I wondered how I could have failed to perceive what was so obvious. I realised, that before a people could be fit for offering civil disobedience, they should thoroughly understand its deeper implications.

But it may be rightly argued: How can a people who are in the habit of frequently evading laws, as most people are, suddenly grasp the significance of civil disobedience, or keep themselves within its strict bounds? I admit, that it is no easy matter for thousands and hundreds of thousands of people to fulfil the ideal conditions mentioned above.

That being so, before re-starting civil disobedience on a mass scale, it would be necessary to create a band of well-tried, pure-hearted volunteers who thoroughly understood the strict conditions of Satyagraha. They could explain these to the people, and by sleepless vigilance keep them on to the right path.

With these thoughts filling my mind I reached Bombay, through the Satyagraha Sabha there raised a corps of Satyagrahi volunteers, and with their help commenced the work of educating the people with regard to the meaning and inner significance of Satyagraha. This was principally done by issuing leaflets of an educative character bearing on the subject.

But whilst this work was going on, I could see that it was a difficult task to interest he people in the peaceful side of Satyagraha. The volunteers too failed to enlist themselves in large numbers. Nor did all those who actually

enlisted take anything like a regular systematic training, and as the days passed by, the number of fresh recruits began gradually to dwindle instead of to grow. I realised, that the progress of the training in civil disobedience was not going to be as rapid as I had at first expected.

CHAPTER XXXIV

'NAVAJIVAN' AND 'YOUNG INDIA'

THUS, whilst this movement for the preservation of non-violence was making steady though slow progress on the one hand, Government's policy of lawless repression was in full career on the other, and was manifesting itself in the Punjab in all its nakedness. Leaders were put under arrest, martial law, which in other words meant no law, was proclaimed, special tribunals were set up. These tribunals were not courts of justice, but only instruments for carrying out the arbitrary will of an autocrat. Sentences were passed unwarranted by evidence, and in flagrant violation of justice. In

Amritsar innocent men and women were made to crawl like worms on their bellies. Before this procedure the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy paled into insignificance in my eyes, though it was this massacre principally that attracted the attention of the people of India, and of the world.

I was pressed to proceed to the Punjab immediately in disregard of consequences. I wrote and also telegraphed to the Viceroy asking for permission to go there, but in vain. If I proceeded without the necessary permission, I should not be allowed to cross the boundary of the Punjab, and should be left to find what satisfaction I could from civil disobedience. I was thus confronted by a serious dilemma. As things stood, to break the order against my entry into the Punjab could, it seemed to me, hardly be classed as civil disobedience, for I did not see around me the kind of peaceful atmosphere that I wanted, and the unbridled repression in the Punjab had

further served to aggravate and deepen the feelings of resentment. For me, therefore, to offer civil disobedience at such a time, even if it were possible, would have been like fanning the flame. I therefore decided not to proceed to the Punjab in spite of the suggestion of friends. It was a bitter pill for me to swallow. Tales of rank injustice and oppression came pouring in daily from the Punjab, but all I could do was to sit helplessly by and gnash my teeth.

Just then Mr. Horniman, in whose hands the *Bombay Chronicle* had become a formidable force, was suddenly spirited away by the authorities. This act of the Government seemed to me to be surrounded by a foulness which still stinks in my nostrils. I know that Mr. Horniman never desired lawlessness. He had not liked my breaking the prohibitory order of the Punjab Government without the permission of the Satyagraha Committee, and had fully endorsed the decision to suspend civil

disobedience. I had even received from him a letter advising suspension before I had announced my decision to that effect. Only owing to the distance between Bombay and Ahmedabad I got the letter after the announcement. His sudden deportation therefore caused me as much pain as surprise.

As a result of these developments I was asked by the directors of the *Bombay Chronicle* to take up the responsibility of conducting that paper. Mr. Brelvi was already there on the staff, so not much remained to be done by me, but as usual with my nature, the responsibility would have become an additional tax.

But the Government came as it were to my rescue, for by its action, the publication of the *Chronicle* had to be suspended.

The friends who were directing the management of the *Chronicle*, *viz.*, Messrs. Omar Sobani and Shankarlal Banker, were at this time also controlling

Young India. They suggested, that in view of the suppression of the *Chronicle*, I should now take up the editorship of *Young India*, and further, that in order to fill the gap left by the former, *Young India* should be converted from a weekly into a bi-weekly organ. This was what I felt also. I was anxious to expound the inner meaning of Satyagraha to the public, and also hoped, that through this effort, I should at least be able to do justice to the Punjab situation. For, behind all I wrote, there was potential Satyagraha, and the Government knew as much. I therefore readily accepted the suggestion made by these friends.

But how could the general public be trained in Satyagraha through the medium of English? My principal field of work lay in Gujarat. Sjt. Indulal Yajnik was at that time associated with the group of Messrs. Sobani and Banker. He was conducting the Gujarati monthly *Navajivan* which had the financial backing of these friends. They placed

the monthly at my disposal, and further Sjt. Indulal offered to work on it. This monthly was converted into a weekly.

In the meantime the *Chronicle* was resuscitated. *Young India* was therefore restored to its original weekly form. To have published the two weeklies from two different places would have been very inconvenient to me, and would have involved more expenditure. As *Navajivan* was already being published from Ahmedabad, *Young India* was also removed there at my suggestion.

There were other reasons besides for this change. I had already learnt from my experience with *Indian Opinion*, that such journals needed a press of their own. Moreover the press laws in force in India at that time were such, that if I wanted to express my views untrammelled, the existing printing presses which were naturally run for business would have hesitated to publish them. The need for setting up a press of our own, therefore, became all the

more imperative, and since this could be conveniently done only at Ahmedabad, *Young India* too had to be taken there.

Through these journals I now commenced to the best of my ability the work of educating the reading public in Satyagraha. Both of them had reached a very wide circulation, which at one time rose to the neighbourhood of forty thousand each. But while the circulation of *Navajivan* went up at a bound, that of *Young India* increased only by slow degrees. After my incarceration the circulation of both these journals fell to a low ebb, and today stands below eight thousand.

From the very start I set my face against taking advertisements in these journals. I do not think that they have lost anything thereby. On the contrary it is my belief, that it has in no small measure helped them to maintain their independence.

Incidentally these journals helped me also, to some extent, to remain at peace

with myself, for whilst immediate resort to civil disobedience was out of the question, they enabled me freely to ventilate my views, and to put heart into the people. Thus I feel, that both the journals rendered good service to the people in this hour of trial, and did their humble bit towards lightening the tyranny of the martial law.

CHAPTER XXXV

IN THE PUNJAB

SIR Michael O'Dwyer held me responsible for all that had happened in the Punjab, and some irate young Punjabis held me responsible for the martial law. They asserted, that if only I had not suspended civil disobedience, there would have been no Jalianwala Bagh massacre. Some of them even went the length of threatening me with assassination if I went to the Punjab.

But I felt, that my position was so correct and above question, that no intelligent person could misunderstand it.

I was impatient to go to the Punjab. I had never been there before, and

that made me all the more anxious to see things for myself. Dr. Satyapal, Dr. Kitchlu and Pandit Rambhaj Dutt Chowdhari, who had invited me to the Punjab, were at this time in jail. But I felt sure, that the Government could not dare to keep them and the other prisoners in prison for long. A large number of Punjabis used to come and see me whenever I was in Bombay. I ministered to them a word of cheer on these occasions, and that would comfort them. My self-confidence of that time was infectious.

But my going to the Punjab had to be postponed again and again. The Viceroy would say, 'not yet,' every time I asked for permission to go there, and so the thing dragged on.

In the meantime the Hunter Committee was announced to hold an inquiry in connection with the Punjab Government's doings under the martial law. Mr. C. F. Andrews had now reached the Punjab. His letters gave a heart-rending

description of the state of things there, which left me with the impression, that the martial law atrocities were in fact even worse than the press reports showed. He pressed me urgently to come and join him. At the same time Malaviyaji sent telegrams asking me to proceed to the Punjab at once. I once more telegraphed to the Viceroy asking whether I could now go to the Punjab. He wired back in reply that I could go there after a certain date. I cannot exactly recollect now, but I think it was 17th of October.

The scene that I witnessed on my arrival at Lahore can never be effaced from my memory. The railway station was from end to end one seething mass of humanity. The entire populace had turned out of doors in eager expectation, as if to meet a dear relation after a long separation, and was delirious with joy. I was put up at the late Pandit Rambhaj Dutt's bungalow, and the burden of entertaining me fell on the shoulders of Shrimati Sarala Devi.

A burden it truly was, for even then, as now, the place where I was accommodated became a veritable caravanserai.

Owing to the principal Punjab leaders being in jail, their place, I found, had been properly taken up by Pandit Malaviyaji, Pandit Motilalji and the late Swami Shraddhanandji. Malaviyaji and Shraddhanandji I had known intimately before, but this was the first occasion on which I came in close personal contact with Motilalji. All these leaders, as also such local leaders as had escaped the privilege of going to jail, at once made me feel perfectly at home amongst them, so that I never felt like a stranger in their midst.

How we unanimously decided not to lead evidence before the Hunter Committee is now a matter of history. The reasons for that decision were published at that time, and need not be recapitulated here. Suffice it to say, that looking back upon these events

from this distance of time, I still feel that our decision to boycott the Committee was absolutely correct and proper.

As a logical consequence of the boycott of the Hunter Committee, it was decided to appoint a non-official inquiry Committee, to hold almost a parallel inquiry on behalf of the Congress. Pandit Motilal Nehru, the late Deshabandhu C. R. Das, Sjt. Abbas Tyebji, Sjt. M. R. Jayakar and myself were appointed to this Committee, virtually by Pandit Malaviyaji. We distributed ourselves over various places for purposes of inquiry. The responsibility for organising the work of the Committee devolved on me, and as the privilege of conducting the inquiry in the largest number of places fell to my lot, I got a rare opportunity of observing at close quarters the people of the Punjab and the Punjab villages.

In the course of my inquiry I made acquaintance with the women of the

Punjab also. It was as if we had known one another for ages. Wherever I went they came flocking, and laid before me their heaps of yarn. My work in connection with the inquiry thus brought home to me the fact, that the Punjab could become a great field for Khadi work.

As I proceeded further and further with my inquiry into the atrocities that had been committed on the people, I came across tales of Government's tyranny and the arbitrary despotism of its officers such as I was hardly prepared for, and they filled me with deep pain. What surprised me then, and what still continues to fill me with surprise, was the fact, that a province, that had furnished the largest number of soldiers to the British Government during the War, should have taken all these brutal excesses lying down.

The task of drafting the report of this Committee was also entrusted to me, and I would recommend a perusal of

this report to any one who wants to have an idea of the kind of atrocities that were perpetrated on the Punjab people. All that I wish to say here about it is, that there is not a single conscious exaggeration in it anywhere, and every statement made in it is substantiated by evidence. Moreover the evidence published was only a fraction of what was in the Committee's possession. Not a single statement, regarding the validity of which there was the slightest room for doubt, was permitted to appear in the report. This report, prepared as it was solely with a view to bringing out the truth, and nothing but the truth, will enable the reader to see to what lengths the British Government is capable of going, and what inhumanities and barbarities it is capable of perpetrating in order to maintain its power. So far as I am aware, not a single statement made in this report has ever been disproved.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE KHILAFAT AGAINST COW PROTECTION?

WE must now leave, for the time being, these dark happenings in the Punjab.

The Congress inquiry into Dyerism in the Punjab had just commenced, when I received a letter of invitation to be present at a joint Conference of Hindus and Musalmans that was to meet at Delhi to deliberate on the Khilafat question. Among the signatories to it were the late Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb and Mr. Asaf Ali. The late Swami Shraddhanandji, it was stated, would be attending, and if I remember aright, he was to be the vice-president of the

Conference, which, so far as I can recollect, was to be held in the November of that year. The Conference was to deliberate on the situation arising out of the Khilafat betrayal, and on the question as to whether the Hindus and Musalmans should take any part in the Peace celebrations. The letter of invitation went on to say, among other things, that not only the Khilafat question, but the question of cow protection as well, would be discussed at the Conference, and it would, therefore, afford a golden opportunity for a settlement of the cow question. I did not like this reference to the cow question. In my letter in reply to the invitation, therefore, whilst promising to do my best to attend, I suggested that the two questions should not be mixed up together, or considered in the spirit of a bargain, but should be decided on their own merits, and treated separately.

With these thoughts filling my mind, I went to the Conference. It was a very

well attended gathering, though it did not present the spectacle of later gatherings that were attended by tens of thousands. I discussed the question referred to above with the late Swami Shraddhanandji who was present at the Conference. He appreciated my argument, and left it to me to place it before the Conference. I likewise discussed it with the late Hakim Saheb. Before the Conference I contended, that if the Khilafat question had a just and legitimate basis, as I believe it had, and if the Government had really committed a gross injustice, the Hindus were bound to stand by the Musalmans in their demand for the redress of the Khilafat wrong. It would ill become them to bring in the cow question in this connection, or to use the occasion to make terms with the Musalmans, just as it would ill become the Musalmans to offer to stop cow slaughter as a price for the Hindus' support on the Khilafat question. But it would be another

matter and quite graceful, and reflect great credit on them, if the Musalmans of their own free will stopped cow slaughter out of regard for the religious sentiments of the Hindus, and from a sense of duty towards them as neighbours and children of the same soil. To take up such an independent attitude was, I contended, their duty, and would enhance the dignity of their conduct. But if the Musalmans considered it as their neighbourly duty to stop cow slaughter, they should do so regardless of whether the Hindus helped them in the Khilafat or not. 'That being so,' I argued, 'the two questions should be discussed independently of each other, and the deliberations of the Conference should be confined to the question of the Khilafat only.' My argument appealed to those present, and as a result, the question of cow protection was not discussed at this Conference.

But in spite of my warning Maulana Abdul Bari Saheb said: 'No matter

whether the Hindus help us or not, the Musalmans ought, as the countrymen of the Hindus, out of regard for the latter's susceptibilities, to give up cow slaughter.' And at one time it almost looked as if they would really put an end to it.

There was a suggestion from some quarters, that the Punjab question should be tacked on to that of the Khilafat wrong. I opposed the proposal. The Punjab question, I said, was a local affair, and could not therefore weigh with us in our decision to participate or not in the Peace celebrations. If we mixed up the local question with the Khilafat question which arose directly out of the Peace terms, we should be guilty of a serious indiscretion. My argument easily carried conviction.

Maulana Hasrat Mohani was present in this meeting. I had known him even before, but it was only here that I discovered what a fighter he was. We differed from each other almost

from the very beginning, and in several matters the differences have persisted.

Among the numerous resolutions that were passed at this Conference, one called upon both Hindus and Musalmans to take the Swadeshi vow, and as a natural corollary to it, to boycott foreign goods. Khadi had not as yet found its proper place. This was not a resolution that Hasrat Saheb would accept. His object was to wreak vengeance on the British Empire in case justice was denied in the matter of the Khilafat. Accordingly he brought in a counter proposal for the boycott purely of British goods so far as practicable. I opposed it on the score of principle, as also practicability, adducing for it my arguments that have now become pretty familiar. I also put before the Conference my viewpoint of non-violence. I noticed that my arguments made a deep impression on the audience. Before me, Hasrat Mohani's speech had been received with such loud acclamations, that I was afraid that mine would

only be a cry in the wilderness. I had made bold to speak only because I felt that it would be a dereliction of duty not to lay my views before the Conference. But to my agreeable surprise, my speech was followed with the closest attention by those present, and evoked a full measure of support among those on the platform, and speaker after speaker rose to deliver speeches in support of my views. The leaders were able to see, that not only would the boycott of British goods fail of its purpose, but would, if adopted, make of them a laughing stock. There was hardly a man present in that assembly but had some article of British manufacture on his person. Many of the audience therefore realised, that nothing but harm could result from adopting a resolution that even those, who voted for it, were unable to carry out.

'Mere boycott of foreign cloth cannot satisfy us, for who knows how long it will be, before we shall be able to

manufacture Swadeshi cloth in sufficient quantity for our needs, and before we can bring about an effective boycott of foreign cloth? We want something that will produce an immediate effect on the British. Let your boycott of foreign cloth stand, we do not mind it, but give us something quicker, and speedier in addition' — so spoke in effect Maulana Hasrat Mohani. Even as I was listening to him, I felt that something new, over and above boycott of foreign cloth, would be necessary. An immediate boycott of foreign cloth seemed to me also to be a clear impossibility at that time. I did not then know that we could, if we liked, produce enough Khadi for all our clothing requirements; this was only a later discovery. On the other hand, I knew even then, that if we depended on the mills alone for effecting the boycott of foreign cloth, we should be betrayed. I was still in the middle of this dilemma when the Maulana concluded his speech.

I was handicapped for want of suitable Hindi or Urdu words. This was my first occasion for delivering an argumentative speech before an audience especially composed of Musalmans of the North. I had spoken in Urdu at the Muslim League at Calcutta, but it was only for a few minutes, and the speech was intended only to be a feeling appeal to the audience. Here on the contrary, I was faced with a critical, if not hostile, audience, to whom I had to explain and bring home my viewpoint. But I had cast aside all shyness. I was not there to deliver an address in the faultless, polished Urdu of the Delhi Muslims, but to place before the gathering my views in such broken Hindi as I could command. And in this I was successful. This meeting afforded me a direct proof of the fact that Hindi-Urdu alone could become the *lingua franca* of India. Had I spoken in English, I could not have produced the impression that I did on the audience, and the Maulana might not

have felt called upon to deliver his challenge. Nor if he had delivered it, could I have taken it up effectively.

I could not hit upon a suitable Hindi or Urdu word for the new idea, and that put me out somewhat. At last I described it by the word 'non-co-operation,' an expression that I used for the first time at this meeting. As the Maulana was delivering his speech, it seemed to me, that it was vain for him to talk about effective resistance to a Government, with which he was co-operating in more than one thing, if resort to arms was impossible or undesirable. The only true resistance to the Government, it therefore seemed to me, was to cease to co-operate with it. Thus I arrived at the word non-co-operation. I had not then a clear idea of all its manifold implications. I therefore did not enter into details. I simply said:

'The Musalmans have adopted a very important resolution. If the Peace

terms are unfavourable to them,— which may God forbid,— they will stop all co-operation with Government. It is an inalienable right of the people thus to withhold co-operation. We are not bound to retain Government titles and honours, or to continue in Government service. If Government should betray us in a great cause like the Khilafat, we could not do otherwise than non-co-operate. We are therefore entitled to non-co-operate with Government in case of a betrayal.'

But months elapsed before the word non-co-operation became current coin. For the time being it was lost in the proceedings of the Conference. Indeed when I supported the co-operation resolution at the Congress which met at Amritsar a month later, I did so in the hope that the betrayal would never come.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE AMRITSAR CONGRESS

THE Punjab Government could not keep in confinement hundreds of Punjabis, who, under the martial law regime, had been clapped into jail on the strength of the most meagre evidence by tribunals that were courts only in name. There was such an outcry all round against this flagrant piece of injustice, that their further incarceration became impossible. Most of the prisoners were released before the Congress opened. Lala Harkishanlal and the other leaders were all released, while the session of the Congress was still in progress. The Ali Brothers too arrived there straight from

their jail. The people's joy knew no bounds. Pandit Motilal Nehru, who, at the sacrifice of his splendid practice, had made the Punjab his headquarters, and had done great service, was the President of the Congress; the late Swami Shraddhanandji was the Chairman of the Reception Committee.

Up to this time my share in the annual proceedings of the Congress was confined only to the constructive advocacy of Hindi by making my speech in the national language, and to presenting in that speech the case of the Indians overseas. Nor did I expect to be called upon to do anything more this year. But as had happened on many a previous occasion, responsible work came to me all of a sudden.

The King's announcement on the new reforms had just been issued. It was not wholly satisfactory even to me, and was unsatisfactory to every one else. But I felt at that time, that the reforms though defective could still be accepted.

I felt in the King's announcement and its language the hand of Lord Sinha, and it lent a ray of hope. But experienced stalwarts like the late Lokamanya and Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das shook their heads. Pandit Malaviyaji was neutral.

Pandit Malaviyaji had harboured me in his own room. I had a glimpse of the simplicity of his life on the occasion of the foundation ceremony of the Hindu University, but on this occasion, being in the same room with him I was able to observe his daily routine in the closest detail, and what I saw filled me with joyful surprise. His room presented the appearance of a free inn for all the poor. You could hardly cross from one end to the other. It was so crowded. It was accessible at all odd hours to chance visitors who had the licence to take as much of his time as they liked. In a corner of this crib lay my *charpai*[1] in all its dignity.

1 A light Indian bedstead.

But I may not occupy this chapter with a description of Malaviyaji's mode of living, and must return to my subject.

I was thus enabled to hold daily discussions with Malaviyaji who used lovingly to explain to me, like an elder brother, the various viewpoints of the different parties. I saw, that my participation in deliberations on the resolution on the reforms was inevitable. Having had my share of responsibility in the drawing up of the Congress report on the Punjab wrongs, I felt that all that still remained to be done in that connection must claim my attention. There had to be dealings with Government in that matter. Then similarly there was the Khilafat question. I further believed at that time, that Mr. Montagu would not betray or allow India's cause to be betrayed. The release of the Ali Brothers and other prisoners too seemed to me to be an auspicious sign. In these circumstances I felt, that a resolution not rejecting but accepting

the reforms was the correct thing. Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das on the other hand held firmly to the view, that the reforms ought to be rejected as wholly inadequate and unsatisfactary. The late Lokamanya was more or less neutral, but had decided to throw in his weight on the side of any resolution that the Deshabandhu might approve.

The idea of having to differ from such seasoned, well-tried and universally revered leaders was unbearable to me. But on the other hand the voice of conscience was clear. I tried to run away from the Congress, and suggested to Pandit Malaviyaji and Motilalji, that it would be in the general interest if I absented myself from the Congress for the rest of the session. It would save me from having to make an exhibition of my difference with such esteemed leaders.

But my suggestion found no favour with these two seniors. The news of my proposal was somehow whispered to

Lala Harkishanlal. 'This will never do. It will very much hurt the feelings of the Punjabis,' he said. I discussed the matter with Lokamanya, Deshabandhu and Mr. Jinnah, but no way out could be found. Finally I laid bare my distress to Malaviyaji. 'I see no prospect of a compromise,' I told him, 'and if I am to move my resolution, a division will have to be called and votes taken. But I do not find here any arrangements for it. The practice in the open session of the Congress so far has been to take votes by a show of hands with the result, that all distinction between visitors and delegates is lost, while as for taking a count of votes in such vast assemblies, we have no means at all. So it comes to this, that even if I want to call a division there will be no facility for it, nor meaning in it.' But Lala Harkishanlal came to the rescue and undertook to make the necessary arrangements. 'We will not,' he said, 'permit visitors in the Congress pandal on the day on which

voting is to take place. And as for taking the count, well, I shall see to that. But you must not absent yourself from the Congress.'

I capitulated; I framed my resolution, and in heart trembling undertook to move it. Pandit Malaviyaji and Mr. Jinnah were to support it. I could notice, that although our difference of opinion was free from any trace of bitterness, and although our speeches too contained nothing but cold reasoning, the people could not stand the very fact of a difference; it pained them. They wanted unanimity.

Even while speeches were being delivered, efforts to settle the difference were being made on the platform, and notes were being freely exchanged among the leaders for that purpose. Malaviyaji was leaving no stone unturned to bridge the gulf. Just then Jeramdas handed over his amendment to me, and pleaded in his own sweet manner to save the delegates from the dilemma of a division.

His amendment appealed to me. Malaviyaji's eye was already scanning every quarter for a ray of hope. I told him, that Jeramdas's amendment seemed to me to be likely to be acceptable to both the parties. The Lokamanya to whom it was next shown said, 'If C. R. Das approves, I will have no objection.' Deshabandhu at last thawed, and cast a look towards Sjt. Bepin Chandra Pal for endorsement. Malaviyaji was filled with hope. He snatched away the slip of paper containing the amendment, and before Deshabandhu had even pronounced a definite 'yes,' shouted out, 'Brother delegates, you will be glad to learn that a compromise has been reached.' What followed beggars description. The pandal was rent with the clapping of hands, and the erstwhile gloomy faces of the audience lit up with joy.

It is hardly necessary to deal with the text of the amendment. My object here is only to describe how this

resolution was undertaken as part of my experiments with which these chapters deal.

The compromise further increased my responsibility.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CONGRESS INITIATION

I do not regard my participation in Congress proceedings at Amritsar as my real entrance into the Congress politics. My attendance at the previous Congresses was nothing more perhaps than an annual renewal of allegiance to the Congress. I never felt on these occasions, that I had any other work cut out for me except that of a mere private, nor did I desire more.

My experience of Amritsar had shown, that there were one or two things for which perhaps I had some aptitude, and which could be useful to the Congress. I could already see, that the late

Lokamanya, the Deshabandhu, Pandit Motilalji and other leaders were pleased with my work in connection with the Punjab Inquiry. They used to invite me to their informal gatherings, where, as I found, solutions for the Subjects Committee were conceived. At these gatherings only those persons were invited who enjoyed the special confidence of the leaders, and whose services were needed by them. Interlopers also sometimes found their way to these meetings.

There were, for the coming year, two things which interested me, as I had some aptitude for them. One of these was the memorial of the Jalianwala Bagh massacre. The Congress had passed a resolution for it amid great enthusiasm. A fund of about five lakhs had to be collected for it. I was appointed one of the trustees. Pandit Malaviyaji enjoyed the reputation of being the prince among beggars for the public cause. But I knew that I was not far behind him in

that respect. It was whilst I was in South Africa, that I had discovered my capacity in this direction. I had not the unrivalled magic of Malaviyaji for commanding princely donations from the potentates of India. But I knew that there was no question of approaching the Rajas and Maharajas for donations for the Jalianwala Bagh memorial. The main responsibility for the collection thus fell, as I had expected, on my shoulders. The generous citizens of Bombay subscribed most liberally, and the memorial trust has at present a handsome credit balance in the bank. But the problem that faces the country today is what kind of memorial to erect on the ground, to sanctify which, Hindus, Musalmans and Sikhs mingled their blood. The three communities, instead of being bound in a bond of amity and love, are, to all appearances, at war with one another, and the nation is at a loss as to how to utilise the memorial fund.

My other aptitude which the Congress could utilise was as a draftsman. The Congress leaders had found, that I had a faculty for condensed expression, which I had acquired by long practice. The then existing constitution of the Congress was Gokhale's legacy. He had framed a few rules, which served as a basis for running the Congress machinery. The interesting history of the framing of these rules I had learnt from Gokhale's own lips. But everybody had now come to feel, that these rules were no longer adequate for the ever increasing business of the Congress. The question had been coming up year after year. The Congress at that time had practically no machinery functioning during the interval between session to session, or for dealing with fresh contingencies that might arise in the course of the year. The existing rules provided for three secretaries, but as matter of fact, only one of them was a functioning secretary, and even he was not a whole-timer.

How was he, single-handed, to run the Congress office, to think of the future, or to discharge during the current year the obligations contracted by the Congress in the past? During that year, therefore, everybody felt that this question would assume all the more importance. The Congress was too unwieldy a body for the discussion of public affairs. There was no limit set to the number of delegates in the Congress or to the number of delegates that each province could return. Some improvement upon the existing chaotic condition was thus felt by everybody to be an imperative necessity. I undertook the responsibility of framing a constitution on one condition, and it was this. I saw that there were two leaders, *viz.*, the Lokamanya and the Deshabandhu who had the greatest hold on the public. I requested, that they as the representatives of the people should be associated with me on the Committee for framing the constitution.

But since it was obvious, that they would not have the time personally to participate in the constitution-making work, I suggested that two persons enjoying their confidence should be appointed along with me on the Constitution Committee, and that the number of its personnel should be limited to three. This suggestion was accepted by the late Lokamanya and the late Deshabandhu, who suggested the names of Sjts. Kelkar and I. B. Sen respectively as their proxies. The Constitution Committee could not even once come together, but we were able to consult with each other by correspondence, and in the end presented a unanimous report. I regard this constitution with a certain measure of pride. I hold, that if we could fully work out this constitution, the mere fact of working it out would bring us Swaraj. With the assumption of this responsibility I may be said to have made my real entrance into the Congress politics.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE BIRTH OF KHADI

I do not remember to have seen a handloom or a spinning wheel till the year 1908, when in *Hind Swaraj*, I described it as the panacea for the growing pauperism of India. In that book I took it as understood, that anything that helped India to get rid of the grinding poverty of her masses would in the same process also establish Swaraj. Even in 1915, when I returned to India from South Africa, I had not actually seen a spinning wheel. When the Satyagraha Ashram was founded at Sabarmati, we introduced a few handlooms there. But no sooner had we done

this, than we found ourselves up against a difficulty. All of us belonged either to the liberal professions or to business; not one of us was an artisan. We needed a weaving expert to teach us to weave before we could work the looms. One was at last procured from Palanpur, but he did not communicate to us the whole of his art. But Maganlal Gandhi was not one to be easily baffled. Possessed of a natural talent for mechanics he was able fully to master the art before long, and one after another several new weavers were trained up in the Ashram.

The object that we set before ourselves was to be able to clothe ourselves entirely in cloth manufactured by our own hands. We therefore forthwith discarded the use of mill-woven cloth, and all the members of the Ashram resolved to wear hand-woven cloth made from Indian yarn only. The adoption of this practice brought us a world of experience. It enabled us to know, from

direct contact, the conditions of life among the weavers, the extent of their production, the handicaps in the way of their obtaining their yarn supply, the way in which they were being made victims of fraud, and lastly, their ever growing indebtedness. We were not in a position immediately to manufacture all the cloth for our needs. The alternative therefore was to get our cloth supply from handloom weavers. But ready-made cloth from Indian mill-yarn was not easily obtainable either from the cloth-dealers or from the weavers themselves. All the fine cloth woven by the weavers was from foreign yarn, since Indian mills did not spin fine counts. Even today the outturn of higher counts by Indian mills is very limited, whilst highest counts they cannot spin at all. It was after the greatest effort, that we were at last able to find some weavers, who condescended to weave Swadeshi yarn for us, and only on condition that the Ashram would take off all the cloth that they might produce.

By thus adopting cloth woven from mill-yarn as our wear, and propagating it among our friends, we made ourselves voluntary agents of the Indian spinning mills. This in its turn brought us into contact with the mills, and enabled us to know something about their management and their handicaps. We saw that the aim of the mills was more and more to weave the yarn spun by them; their co-operation with the handloom weaver was not willing, but unavoidable and temporary. We became impatient to be able to spin our own yarn. It was clear, that till we could do this ourselves, dependence on the mills would remain. We did not feel that we could render any service to the country by continuing as agents of Indian spinning mills.

No end of difficulties again faced us. We could neither get a spinning wheel nor a spinner to teach us how to spin. We were employing some wheels for filling pearns and bobbins for weaving in the Ashram. But we had no idea, that

these could be used as spinning wheels. Once Kalidas Jhaveri discovered a woman who, he said, would demonstrate to us how spinning was done. We sent to her a member of the Ashram who was known for his great versatility in learning new things. But even he returned without wresting the secret of the art.

So the time passed on, and my impatience grew with the time. I plied every chance visitor to the Ashram, who was likely to possess some information about handspinning, with questions about the art. But the art being confined to women and having been all but exterminated, if there was some stray spinner still surviving in some obscure corner, only a member of that sex was likely to find out her whereabouts.

In the year 1917 I was taken by my Gujarati friends to preside at the Broach Educational Conference. It was here, that I discovered that remarkable lady Gangabehn Majmundar. She was a widow, but her enterprising spirit knew no

bounds. Her education, in the accepted sense of the term, was not much. But in courage and commonsense she easily surpassed the general run of our educated women. She had already got rid of the curse of untouchability, and fearlessly moved among and served the suppressed classes. She had means of her own, and her needs were few. She had a well seasoned constitution, and went about everywhere without an escort. She felt quite at home on horseback. I came to know her more intimately at the Godhra Conference. To her I poured out my grief about the charkha, and she lightened my burden by a promise to prosecute an earnest and incessant search for the spinning wheel.

CHAPTER XL

FOUND AT LAST!

AT last, after no end of wandering in Gujarat, Gangabehn found the spinning wheel in Vijapur, in the Baroda State. Quite a number of people there had spinning wheels in their homes, but had long since consigned them to the lofts as useless lumber. They expressed to Gangabehn their readiness to resume spinning, if some one promised to provide them with a regular supply of slivers, and to buy the yarn spun by them. Gangabehn communicated the joyful news to me. The providing of slivers was found to be a difficult task. On my mentioning the thing to the late

Umar Sobani, he solved the difficulty by immediately undertaking to send a sufficient supply of slivers from his mill. I sent to Gangabehn the slivers received from Umar Sobani, and soon yarn began to pour in at such a rate, that it became quite a problem how to cope with it.

Mr. Umar Sobani's generosity was great, but still one could not go on taking advantage of it for ever. I felt ill at ease continuously receiving slivers from him. Moreover it seemed to me to be fundamentally wrong to use mill-slivers. If one could use mill-slivers, why not use mill-yarn as well? Surely no mills supplied slivers to the ancients? How did they make their slivers then? With these thoughts in my mind I suggested to Gangabehn to find carders who could supply slivers. She confidently undertook the task. She engaged a carder who was prepared to card cotton. He demanded thirty five rupees, if not much more, per month. I considered no price too high at

the time. She trained a few youngsters to make slivers out of the carded cotton. I begged for cotton in Bombay. Sjt. Yashvantprasad Desai at once responded. Gangabehn's enterprise thus prospered beyond expectation. She found out weavers to weave the yarn that was spun in Vijapur, and soon Vijapur Khadi gained a name for itself.

While these developments were taking place in Vijapur, the spinning wheel gained a rapid footing in the Ashram. Maganlal Gandhi, by bringing to bear all his splendid mechanical talent on the wheel, made many improvements in it, and wheels and their accessories began to be manufactured at the Ashram. The first piece of Khadi manufactured in the Ashram cost 17 annas per yard. I did not hesitate to commend this very coarse Khadi at that rate to friends, who willingly paid the price.

I was laid up in bed at Bombay. But I was fit enough to make searches for the wheel there. At last I chanced upon

two spinners. They charged one rupee for a seer of yarn, *i. e.*, 28 *tolas* or nearly three quarters of a pound. I was then ignorant of the economics of Khadi. I considered no price too high for securing handspun yarn. On comparing the rates paid by me with those paid in Vijapur I found that I was being cheated. The spinners refused to agree to any reduction in their rates. So I had to dispense with their services. But they served their purpose. They taught spinning to Shrimatis Avantikabai, Ramibai Kamdar, the widowed mother of Sjt. Shankarlal Banker and Shrimati Vasumatibehn. The wheel began merrily to hum in my room, and I may say without exaggeration that its hum had no small share in restoring me to health. I am prepared to admit that its effect was more psychological than physical. But then it only shows how powerful the physical in man reacts to the psychological. I too set my hand to the wheel but I did not do much with it at the time.

In Bombay, again, the same old problem of obtaining a supply of hand-made slivers presented itself. A carder twanging his bow used to pass daily by Sjt. Revashankar's residence. I sent for him, and learnt that he carded cotton for stuffing mattresses. He agreed to card cotton for slivers, but demanded a stiff price for it, which however I paid. The yarn thus prepared I disposed of to some Vaishnava friends for making from it the garlands for the *pavitra ekadashi*. Sjt. Shivji started a spinning class in Bombay. All these experiments involved considerable expenditure. But it was willingly defrayed by patriotic friends, lovers of the motherland, who had faith in Khadi. The money thus spent, in my humble opinion, was not wasted. It brought us a rich store of experience, and revealed to us the possibilities of the spinning wheel.

I now grew impatient for the exclusive adoption of Khadi for my dress. My *dhoti* was yet of Indian mill

cloth. The coarse Khadi manufactured in the Ashram and at Vijapur was only 30 inches in width. I gave notice to Gangabehn that, unless she provided me with a Khadi *dhoti* of 45 inches width within a month, I would do with coarse, short Khadi *dhoti*. The ultimatum came upon her as a shock. But she proved equal to the demand made upon her. Well within the month she sent me a pair of Khadi *dhotis* of 45 inches width, and thus relieved me from what would then have been a difficult situation for me.

At about the same time Sjt. Lakshmidas brought Sjt. Ramji, the weaver, with his wife Gangabehn from Lathi to the Ashram and got Khadi *dhotis* woven at the Ashram. The part played by this couple in the spread of Khadi was by no means insignificant. They initiated a host of persons in Gujarat, as well as outside, into the art of weaving handspun yarn. To see Gangabehn at her loom is a stirring

sight. When this unlettered but self-possessed sister plies at her loom, she becomes so lost in it, that it is difficult to distract her attention, much less to draw her eyes off her beloved loom.

CHAPTER XLI

AN INSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

FROM its very inception the Khadi movement, Swadeshi movement as it was then called, evoked much criticism from the mill-owners. The late Umar Sobani, a capable mill-owner himself, not only gave me the benefit of his own knowledge and experience, but kept me in touch with the opinion of the other mill-owners as well. The argument advanced by one of these deeply impressed him. He pressed me to meet him. I agreed. Mr. Sobani arranged the interview. The mill-owner opened the conversation.

'You know that there has been Swadeshi agitation before now?'

'Yes, I do,' I replied.

'You are also aware that in the days of the Partition we, the mill-owners, fully exploited the Swadeshi movement. When it was at its height, we raised the prices of cloth, and did even worse things.'

'Yes, I have heard something about it, and it has grieved me.'

'I can understand your grief, but I can see no ground for it. We are not conducting our business out of philanthropy. We do it for profit, we have got to satisfy the shareholders. The price of an article is governed by the demand for it. Who can check the law of demand and supply? The Bengalis should have known, that their agitation was bound to send up the price of Swadeshi cloth by stimulating the demand for it.'

I interrupted: 'The Bengalis like me were trustful in their nature. They believed, in the fulness of their faith, that the mill-owners would not be so utterly selfish and unpatriotic as to betray their country in the hour of its

need, and even to go the length, as they did, of fraudulently passing off foreign cloth as Swadeshi.'

'I knew your believing nature,' he rejoined; 'that is why I put you to the trouble of coming to me, so that I might warn you against falling into the same error as these simple-hearted Bengalis.'

With these words the mill-owner beckoned to his clerk who was standing by to produce samples of the stuff that was being manufactured in his mill. Pointing to it he said: 'Look at this stuff. This is the latest variety turned out by our mill. It is meeting with a widespread demand. We manufacture it from the waste. Naturally, therefore, it is cheap. We send it as far North as the valleys of the Himalayas. We have agencies all over the country, even in places where your voice or your agents can never reach. You can thus see that we do not stand in need of more agents. Besides, you ought to know that India's production of cloth falls far short of its requirements.

The question of Swadeshi, therefore, largely resolves itself into one of production. The moment we can increase our production sufficiently, and improve its quality to the necessary extent, the import of foreign cloth will automatically cease. My advice to you, therefore, is not to carry on your agitation on its present lines, but to turn your attention to the erection of fresh mills. What we need is not propaganda to inflate demand for our goods, but greater production.'

'Then, surely, you will bless my effort, if I am already engaged in that very thing,' I asked.

'How can that be?' he exclaimed, a bit puzzled, 'but may be, you are thinking of promoting the establishment of new mills, in which case you certainly deserve to be congratulated.'

'I am not doing exactly that,' I explained, 'but I am engaged in the revival of the spinning wheel.'

'What is that?' he asked, feeling still more at sea. I told him all about the

spinning wheel, and the story of my long quest after it, and added, 'I am entirely of your opinion; it is no use my becoming virtually an agent for the mills. That would do more harm than good to the country. Our mills will not be in want of custom for a long time to come. My work should be, and therefore is, to organise the production of handspun cloth, and to find means for the disposal of the Khadi thus produced. I am, therefore, concentrating my attention on the production of Khadi. I swear by this form of Swadeshi, because through it I can provide work to the semi-starved, semi-employed women of India. My idea is to get these women to spin yarn, and to clothe the people of India with Khadi woven out of it. I do not know how far this movement is going to succeed, at present it is only in the incipient stage. But I have full faith in it. At any rate it can do no harm. On the contrary to the extent that it can add to the cloth production of the country, be it ever so

small, it will represent so much solid gain. You will thus perceive, then, that my movement is free from the evils mentioned by you.'

He replied, 'If you have additional production in view in organising your movement, I have nothing to say against it. Whether the spinning wheel can make headway in this age of power machinery is another question. But I for one wish you every success.'

CHAPTER XLII

ITS RISING TIDE

I must not devote any more chapters here to a description of the further progress of Khadi. It would be outside the scope of these chapters to give a history of my various activities after they came before the public eye, and I must not attempt it, if only because to do so would require a treatise on the subject. My object in writing these chapters is simply to describe how certain things, as it were spontaneously, presented themselves to me in the course of my experiments with truth.

To resume, then, the story of the non-co-operation movement. Whilst the

powerful Khilafat agitation set up by the Ali Brothers was in full progress, I had long discussions on the subject with the late Maulana Abdul Bari and the other *Ulema*, especially with regard to the extent to which a Musalman could observe the rule of non-violence. In the end they all agreed that Islam did not forbid its followers from following non-violence as a policy, and further, that, while they were pledged to that policy, they were bound faithfully to carry it out. At last the non-co-operation resolution was moved in the Khilafat Conference, and carried after prolonged deliberations. I have a vivid recollection how once at Allahabad a Committee sat all night deliberating upon the subject. In the beginning the late Hakim Saheb was sceptical as to the practicability of non-violent non-co-operation. But after his scepticism was overcome, he threw himself into it heart and soul, and his help proved invaluable to the movement.

Next, the non-co-operation resolution was moved by me at the Gujarat Political Conference that was held shortly afterwards. The preliminary contention raised by the opposition was, that it was not competent to a provincial conference to adopt a resolution in advance of the Congress. As against this, I suggested that the restriction could apply only to a backward movement; but as for going forward, the subordinate organisations were not only fully competent, but were in duty bound to do so, if they had in them the necessary grit and confidence. No permission, I argued, was needed to try to enhance the prestige of the parent institution, provided one did it at one's own risk. The proposition was then discussed on its merits, the debate being marked by its keenness no less than the atmosphere of 'sweet reasonableness' in which it was conducted. On the ballot being taken the resolution was declared carried by an overwhelming majority. The successful

passage of the resolution was due not a little to the personality of Sjt. Vallabhbhai and Abbas Tyebji. The latter was the president, and his leanings were all in favour of the non-co-operation resolution.

The All-India Congress Committee resolved to hold a special session of the Congress in September 1920 at Calcutta to deliberate on this question. Preparations were made for it on a large scale. Lala Lajpat Rai was elected President. Congress and Khilafat specials were run to Calcutta from Bombay. At Calcutta there was a mammoth gathering of delegates and visitors.

At the request of Maulana Shaukat Ali I prepared a draft of the non-co-operation resolution in the train. Up to this time I had more or less avoided the use of the word non-violent in my drafts. I invariably made use of this word in my speeches. My vocabulary on the subject was still in process of formation. I found that I could not bring home my

meaning to purely Moslem audiences with the help of the Sanskrit equivalent for non-violent. I therefore asked Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to give me some other equivalent for it. He suggested the word *ba-aman*, similarly for non-co-operation he suggested the phrase *tark-i-mavalat*.

Thus, while I was still busy devising suitable Hindi, Gujarati and Urdu phraseology for non-co-operation, I was called upon to frame the non-co-operation resolution for that eventful Congress. In the original draft the word 'non-violent' had been left out by me. I had handed over the draft to Maulana Shaukat Ali who was travelling in the same compartment without noticing the omission. During the night I discovered the error. In the morning I sent Mahadev with the message, that the omission should be made good before the draft was sent to the press. But I have an impression, that the draft was printed before the insertion could be

made. The Subjects Committee was to have met the same evening. I had therefore to make the necessary correction in the printed copies of the draft. I afterwards saw, that there would have been great difficulty, had I not been ready with my draft.

None the less my plight was pitiable indeed. I was absolutely at sea as to who would support the resolution and who would oppose it. Nor had I any idea as to the attitude that Lalaji would adopt. I only saw an imposing phalanx of veteran warriors assembled for the fray at Calcutta, Dr. Besant, Pandit Malaviyaji, Sjt. Vijayaraghavachari, Pandit Motilalji and the Deshabandhu being some of them.

In my resolution non-co-operation was postulated only with a view to obtaining redress of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs. That however did not appeal to Sjt. Vijayaraghavachari. 'If non-co-operation was to be declared, why should it be with reference to particular wrongs?

The absence of Swaraj was the biggest wrong that the country was labouring under; it should be against that that non-co-operation should be directed,' he argued. Pandit Motilalji also wanted the demand for Swaraj to be included in the resolution. I readily accepted the suggestion, and incorporated the demand for Swaraj in my resolution, which was passed after an exhaustive, serious and somewhat stormy discussion.

Motilalji was the first to join the movement. I still remember the sweet discussion that I had with him on the resolution. He suggested some changes in its phraseology which I adopted. He undertook to win the Deshabandhu for the movement. The Deshabandhu's heart was inclined towards it, but he felt sceptical as to the capacity of the people to carry out the programme. It was only at the Nagpur Congress, that he and Lalaji accepted it whole-heartedly.

I felt the loss of the late Lokamanya very deeply at the special session. It has

been my firm faith to this day, that had the Lokamanya been then alive, he would have given his benedictions to me on that occasion. But even if it had been otherwise, and he had opposed the movement, I should still have esteemed his opposition as a privilege and an education for myself. We had our differences of opinion always, but they never led to bitterness. He always allowed me to believe, that the ties between us were of the closest. Even as I write these lines, the circumstances of his death stand forth vividly before my mind's eye. It was about the hour of midnight, when Patwardhan, who was then working with me, conveyed over the telephone the news of his death. I was at that time surrounded by my companions. Spontaneously the exclamation escaped my lips, 'My strongest bulwark is gone.' The non-co-operation movement was then in full swing, and I was eagerly looking forward to encouragement and inspiration from him. What

his attitude would have been with regard to the final phase of non-co-operation will always be a matter of speculation, and an idle one at that. But this much is certain, that the deep void left by his death weighed heavily upon everybody present at Calcutta. Every one felt the absence of his counsels in that hour of crisis in the nation's history.

CHAPTER XLIII

AT NAGPUR

THE resolutions adopted at the Calcutta special session of the Congress were to be confirmed at its annual session at Nagpur. Here again, as at Calcutta, there was a great rush of visitors and delegates. The number of delegates in the Congress had not been limited yet. As a result, so far as I can remember, the figure on this occasion reached about fourteen thousand. Lalaji pressed for a slight amendment to the clause about the boycott of schools which I accepted. Similarly, some amendments were made at the instance of the Deshabandhu after which the

non-co-operation resolution was passed unanimously.

The resolution regarding the revision of the Congress constitution too was to be taken up at this session of the Congress. The sub-committee's draft was presented at the Calcutta special session. The matter had therefore been thoroughly ventilated and thrashed out. At the Nagpur session, where it came up for final disposal, Sjt. C. Vijayaraghavachariar was the President. The Subjects Committee passed the draft with only one important change. In my draft the number of delegates had been fixed, I think, at 1,500; the Subjects Committee substituted in its place the figure 6,000. In my opinion this increase was the result of hasty judgment, and experience of all these years has only confirmed me in my view. I hold it to be an utter delusion to believe, that a large number of delegates is in any way a help to the better conduct of the business, or that it safeguards the principle of democracy.

Fifteen hundred delegates, jealous of the interests of the people, broad-minded and truthful, would any day be a better safeguard for democracy than six thousand irresponsible men chosen anyhow. To safeguard democracy the people must have a keen sense of independence, self-respect and their oneness, and should insist upon choosing as their representatives only such persons as are good and true. But obsessed with the idea of numbers as the Subjects Committee was, it would have liked to go even beyond the figure of six thousand. The limit of six thousand was therefore in the nature of a compromise.

The question of the goal of the Congress formed a subject for keen discussion. In the constitution that I had presented, the goal of the Congress was the attainment of Swaraj within the British Empire if possible and without if necessary. A party in the Congress wanted to limit the goal to Swaraj within the British Empire only. Its

viewpoint was put forth by Pandit Malaviyaji and Mr. Jinnah. But they were not able to get many votes. Again the draft constitution provided, that the means for the attainment were to be peaceful and legitimate. This condition too came in for opposition, it being contended, that there should be no restriction upon the means to be adopted. But the Congress adopted the original draft after an instructive and frank discussion. I am of opinion, that if this constitution had been worked out by the people honestly, intelligently and zealously, it would have become a potent instrument of mass education, and the very process of working it out would have brought us Swaraj. But a discussion of the theme would be irrelevant here.

Resolutions about Hindu Muslim unity, the removal of untouchability and Khadi too were passed in this Congress, and since then the Hindu members of the Congress have taken upon themselves the responsibility of ridding Hinduism

of the curse of untouchability, and the Congress has established a living bond of relationship with the 'skeletons' of India through Khadi. The adoption of non-co-operation for the sake of the Khilafat was itself a great practical attempt made by the Congress to bring about Hindu Muslim unity.

FAREWELL

BUT the time has now come to bring these chapters to a close.

My life from this point onward has been so public, that there is hardly anything about it, that the people do not know. Moreover since 1921 I have worked in such close association with the Congress leaders, that I can hardly describe any episode in my life since then without referring to my relations with them. For though Shraddhanandji, the Deshabandhu, Hakim Saheb and Lalaji are no more with us today, we have the good luck to have a host of other veteran Congress leaders still living

and working in our midst. The history of the Congress, since the great changes in it that I have described above, is still in the making. And my principal experiments during the past seven years have all been made through the Congress. A reference to my relations with the leaders would therefore be unavoidable, if I set about describing my experiments further. And this I may not do, at any rate for the present, if only from a sense of propriety. Lastly my conclusions from my current experiments can hardly as yet be regarded as decisive. It therefore seems to me to be my plain duty to close this narrative here. In fact my pen instinctively refuses to proceed further.

It is not without a wrench that I have to take leave of the reader. I set a high value on my experiments. I do not know whether I have been able to do justice to them. I can only say that I have spared no pains to give a faithful narrative. To describe truth, as it has

appeared to me, and in the exact manner in which I have arrived at it, has been my ceaseless effort. The exercise has given me ineffable mental peace, because it has been my fond hope, that it might bring faith in Truth and Ahimsa to waverers.

My uniform experience has convinced me, that there is no other God than Truth. And if every page of these chapters does not proclaim to the reader, that the only means for the realisation of Truth is Ahimsa, I shall deem all my pains in writing these chapters to have been in vain. And, even though my efforts in this behalf may prove fruitless, let the readers know that the vehicle, not the great principle, is at fault. After all, however sincere my strivings after Ahimsa may have been, they have still been imperfect and inadequate. The little fleeting glimpses, therefore, that I have been able to have of Truth can hardly convey an idea of the indescribable lustre of Truth, a million times more

intense than that of the sun we daily see with our eyes. In fact what I have caught is only the faintest glimmer of that mighty effulgence. But this much I can say with assurance, as a result of all my experiments, that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realisation of Ahimsa.

To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those, who say that religion has nothing to do with politics, do not know what religion means.

Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification; without self-purification the observance of the law of Ahimsa must remain an empty dream; God can never be realised

by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification therefore must mean purification in all the walks of life. And purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's surroundings.

But the path of self-purification is hard and steep. To attain to perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action; to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. I know, that I have not in me as yet that triple purity, in spite of constant ceaseless striving for it. That is why the world's praise fails to move me, indeed it very often stings me. To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder far than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms. Ever since my return to India I have had experiences of the dormant passions lying hidden within me. The knowledge of them has made me feel humiliated but not defeated. The

experiences and experiments have sustained me, and given me great joy. But I know that I have still before me a difficult path to traverse. I must reduce myself to zero. So long as one does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him. Ahimsa is the farthest limit of humility.

In bidding farewell to the reader, for the time being at any rate, I ask him to join with me in prayer to the God of Truth, that He may grant me the boon of Ahimsa in mind, word and deed.

THE END

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